ENGLISH STUDIES IN AFRICA

Volume 2 **March, 1959** **Number 1**

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EDITORIAL

"YOUNG MEN IN A HURRY"

A. C. PARTRIDGE

DR E. M. W. Tillyard's recent account of the *revolution* in English studies at Cambridge, *The Muse Unchained* (Bowes and Bowes, London, 1958), deals principally with the 'golden age' of the School from 1917 to 1935. His contribution to this history appears incomplete, largely because both his title and subtitle, in different ways, promise a more up-to-date picture, in which he will describe the *démarche* of his colleague F. R. Leavis after the foundation of *Scrutiny* in 1932.

While an author should not be criticized for failing to write the kind of book his readers anticipate, the title of Dr Tillyard's book does imply the retort courteous to *The Muse in Chains,* by Stephen Potter, which made its appearance in 1937. The reply cannot, by the logic of chronology, remove doubts about the value of university English studies, if it neglects those developments at Cambridge that embarrassed the orthodox from the Thirties until recently; for the School has been associated everywhere, except apparently in Cambridge itself, with the work of Richards and Leavis. Dr Tillyard's book deals, not with 'revolution', but early 'emancipation', the freeing of English at Cambridge from the incubus of Classics, Modern Languages and philology.

The Cambridge School undoubtedly created a flutter in the English dovecote at the close of the Nineteen-Twenties, and its effects are, therefore, worthy of analysis. On the whole the discipline to which I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* made a remarkable contribution has been liberating and salutary. Yet the punch-ball has rebounded, unexpectedly and violently, and dealt some of the enthusiastic engineers a bloody prop, not the least to the sacrilegious who "thought *Pearl* 'bloody nonsense.'" Dr Tillyard sees this reaction as, in part, a mark of the unwisdom of applying practical criticism to the teaching of English in the schools; he feels, very rightly, that it is inappropriate to the immature and semi-literate.* The technique of examining has

*I do not question the value, for a young candidate, of ability to read and interpret a text. Comprehension in the secondary school is one thing, practical criticism quite another.

become hardened and stereotyped, a fate which Richards foresaw and endeavoured in his later work to correct by progressive elements in his thinking.

For Dr Tillyard's illuminating account of the origins of the School, there can be nothing but praise. Both as Secretary of the Faculty Board at a crucial time, and as a scholar of Milton, Shakespeare and Renaissance poetry, he exercised a moderating hand in shaping the School's destiny, without attempting to dominate it. His was among the saner counsels that saved the Cambridge School from heresy. Only the doughty polemist, it would seem, can survive the heat and dust of battles required to effect major changes in an educational system; the more sensitive, but no less truly liberal natures, shrink from the academic lobbying, euphemized as 'politics', necessary for revolution. Tillyard admits that, had it not been for the 1914-18 war, the 'revolution' at Cambridge could hardly have happened. The new courses in English at Cambridge appear to have been designed by 'young men in a hurry' to placate the war-wearied, disillusioned entrants of 1919.

The value of the Cambridge English School, in the eyes of its diehard adherents, must stand or fall by the credo of its faith, the indispensability of practical criticism, or close textual analysis of gobbets of literature, as opposed to the more traditional kinds of literary and linguistic study. Despite the experience of other universities, Tillyard maintains that it "is only the exceptional undergraduate who can master a big bulk of great literature without getting bored or muddled." But he rightly adds that "the average (student) needs also the discipline of a more minute verbal study if he is to keep his balance and remain happy." The discipline of textual analysis, we are told, was coaxed over its numerous academic hurdles by Forbes, Richards and Tillyard, with "the concurrance of the undergraduates" (p. 91): "the barriers were down; there was to be no academic distinction between a good short story written yesterday and a Petrarchian sonnet of the age of Elizabeth; . . . we felt rather as some of the first Protestants had felt about Scripture. This had been so overlaid with gloss and comment that the pure text had been hidden."

Facts, he continues, must never be treated as ends in themselves, but as subordinate to the student's own ideas, which he

develops through his critical responses to literature. The notion sorts strangely with the belief (p. 84) that "imaginative writing was an affair of the emotions alone and the emotions do not lend themselves to analysis." Henry James he finds at fault in his criticism because he is "floridly metaphorical," and therefore evasive; but metaphor is naturally *de rigueur* in poetry. The idealist philosopher, F. H. Bradley, misuses words, but they may yet mean something by the standards of poetry. (Is Tillyard here suggesting that poetry is inferior as a medium of expression to logic?)

It is in his conception of the proper approach to poetry that Tillyard puts himself in a vulnerable position. For him poetry has a functional use adapted to the needs of the student at the time; Narcissus is free to view the watery image of his intellect mirrored in the poem he has elected to analyse. Though repelled by the "misplaced mysticism" of the idea that a poet can reveal "the essence of things", Tillyard is satisfied with the Freudian doctrine that the secondary meaning of "the richer kind of poetry" is likely to be profounder or more important than the surface meaning. But the secondary meaning, one fears, is unlikely to be the same for every intelligent reader. Has it, then, objective value of the kind that is useful in a literary education? "Meaning, like peace," F. W. Bateson reminds us, "is indivisible."

Forbes stood outside of this particular doctrine, because, having "a creative mind he was closer than any member of the English Staff to the roots of creation in others" (p. 88). And this is the crux of the matter, for it substantiates the often avowed belief that the only influential critics of literature have been those who wrestled with the problems of imaginative creation themselves. Tillyard complains that there has never been "a high enough standard in the writing of English at Cambridge"; and it may well have been that the excessive use of textual analysis sapped the life-blood of creative writing by its exhausting feats of exegetic illumination.

Another disadvantage of the Cambridge School is (or was) its disapprobation of research, as opposed (in a misunderstanding way) to 'scholarship.' A scholar, according to Tillyard's definition, was one who wrote books if he wanted to, a researcher one "who imposed a false academic rigidity on a subject whose very health and being depended on remaining fluid." The result

of this untenable distinction was the inability of the School to decide what should be expected of a research student.

The point about research is that it compels the advanced student to turn to original sources of a documentary kind and to check the validity of casual or impressionistic statements, superficially made. Unless these checks are periodically required, error passes current for truth from one generation to another. One of the functions of research is, therefore, to prevent half-truth or untruth from masquerading as historical fact; and this discipline is, or should be, one of the supreme evidences of scholarship. Another function is to reassess critical values; but this requires perspective and the maturing process of time. It is not research, whatever its other educational value, when a student-critic assesses contemporary writers; both he and they are too engaged in the partisan struggle of points of view to achieve aesthetic distance. The lasting, because universal and inspirational, power of literature is what determines ultimate values, and it is with these alone that research, as critical re-assessment, should be concerned. A third province of research is textual criticism, which, in the process of establishing the *ipsissima verba* of an author's art, also displays editorial integrity in the researcher. Without textual criticism, interpretative or analytical criticism (especially of style) is speculative or even dangerous. Shakespeare's plays are not unique in presenting this difficulty; the works of Swift, Wordsworth, Keats, Dickens, Yeats and T. S. Eliot each require a different kind of textual scrutiny. A university school that constitutes itself a critical *élite,* and scants the textual helots who have made interpretative gymnastics possible, not only invites snobbery, but is disrespectful to the memory of its own great textual tradition of Housman, Aldis Wright, Greg, McKerrow and Dover Wilson. There is, however, no limit to the nature of research, and the merit of I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* consisted in its application of mental and moral science to the interpretation and assessment of literature.

Looking back on the struggle for self-determination in English studies at Cambridge, it is clear that the play of original and diverse minds was fruitful at an extremely opportune time. The diversity consisted in the fact that practically all the new English dons had been trained in other Faculties; and does this not

indicate that unnecessary lip-service is now paid to specialist qualifications, and too little to intellect and humanistic breadth of character in a teacher? When the reforming personalities disappeared from the scene, the ardour of unorthodoxy of the School faded. This may not be altogether a bad thing for Cambridge.

As one who enjoyed sitting at the feet of the notables in their heyday, I regarded Mansfield Forbes as one of the finest *university* men of them all. He published practically nothing, but was an inspiring teacher, who interested himself in everything that a liberal culture ought to love — poetry, drama, painting, architecture, the principles of aesthetics, social credit, town-planning, mountaineering and walking tours. His home 'Finella' was a hospitable mansion of art to all who liked good talk and original taste. He was a fighter of causes, but with a disinterested enthusiasm, for his nature was gentle. He was not, like many paradoxical liberals, intolerant in attitude or prejudice.

Dr Tillyard, one of the few remaining Cambridge traditionalists in direct descent from the English School's foundation, has given admirable pen-pictures of Forbes and his contemporaries, Chadwick, Richards, 'Q', Attwater, Coulton and others. For this the reader is grateful, though he misses the tragic hero of the denouement, the editor of *Scrutiny*.

In this disappointment I do not imply that the Cambridge English School, seen after a generation of its fruits, was Leavis-inspired in its coterie aspect. The paradox is that Leavis, in his standards and values, is essentially the product of Cambridge, the early fathers of the 'Establishment' being Chadwick, Forbes and Quiller-Couch, with all their wisdom of self-effacement. 'Q' it was who gave the School its 'Life and Thought' and 'Moralists' paper, and who insisted from the outset, as Professor Basil Willey has assured me, that the founders were not creating an English *Literature* Tripos, but an *English* Tripos. Dr Tillyard has, at least, placed the origins of the latter in historical perspective, and removed the mistaken impression persistent abroad that there has been more than one king in Israel.

THE HARVARD SCHOOL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

DOUGLAS BUSH

AMERICAN colleges of liberal arts, of which Harvard (founded in 1636) is the oldest, are a distinctive phenomenon in the educational world. Their programme is more specialized than that of the English and European secondary school, but less specialized than that of the English and European university. While Harvard itself was established as a nursery for ministers in the infant colony, and carried on the traditions New England divines brought from Cambridge, in modern times it—the undergraduate College, that is—has been devoted to liberal, non-professional education. In theory and practice Harvard College is in most respects typical of the best undergraduate education in the United States; it also has its own special features.

Some other general facts have a bearing on the study of English as well as of everything else. During the past half-century or more the United States has come close to realizing the ideal of high school for all the young, and the results have been both good and bad. The vast increase in numbers has inevitably lowered intellectual standards, and that process has been not only accepted but eagerly promoted by the faculties of Education, which early gained control of the public schools and set up 'adjustment to life' as their aim. (Of late years academic scholars have been with increasing success—and with the recent help of Russia—awakening the public mind to the inadequacies of much secondary education.) There are no national tests and certificates for high school graduates—public education has traditionally been a matter of state and local control—and the multitude represent the widest diversity of ability and attainment. The huge state universities must take in all high school graduates who wish to enter, though they can eliminate a good many during the first year or two. The private colleges and universities, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and many others, can select whom they will admit; they accept roughly a third or a quarter of the applicants. Harvard's undergraduate enrolment is now about 4,500. These eastern colleges make use of the College Board entrance examinations, along with their own individual tests and inquiries. In recent decades Harvard has been consciously seeking

to be more of a national and less of a New England college. It draws its students about equally from the top layers of the better public schools and from the private schools (the latter, Exeter, Andover, Groton, and the rest, correspond to the English 'public schools'). Thus an incoming class at Harvard, of 1,200 or 1,300, may have somewhat less cultural homogeneity than an incoming class at Oxford or Cambridge—though Oxford and Cambridge students seem nowadays to be a more diverse mixture than they were in the nineteenth century. It is a regrettable fact that, because of the rapidly rising costs, the children of teachers and of the clergy, who used to be the backbone of the private colleges, are less and less able to attend them; and, though Harvard has the largest endowment in the world, money has been inadequate for the large proportion of able students who need help.

During most of the nineteenth century Harvard was only the chief New England college; under President Charles W. Eliot it became a major university. President Eliot, a chemist, rebelled against the traditional programme of classics and mathematics and emphasized things modern; he inaugurated the system of 'free electives', if that can be called a system which resulted in a chaos of fragments. During the reign of his successor, A. L. Lowell, undergraduate programmes were put under controls that aimed at combining breadth with concentration, and this general aim still operates. While some especially gifted students may skip the freshman year and be admitted to 'advanced standing', the normal student takes sixteen courses, four a year, for graduation. At the end of his first year he must decide on his field of concentration; if that is English, he must take at least six courses, or at least eight if he is a candidate for honours. All students must take one or two courses in each of three fields, the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences; these courses in so-called 'general education' are planned and taught for students who are not concentrating within the area. Thus courses in the humanities, while they include students of English and other literatures, are addressed mainly to students of the social and natural sciences; these operate on two levels, elementary and advanced, and have a broad sweep—e.g. 'Epic and Novel' (from *The Iliad* to *War and Peace*), 'Ideas of Man and the World in Western Thought' (from the Greeks to Freud), 'Classics of

the Christian Tradition', etc. These courses in the humanities are given by members of various departments. Students of English take corresponding courses in the social and natural sciences. Such a programme leaves some room, not a great deal, for free electives in foreign languages, history, philosophy, art, or what not. In the private colleges, mainly in the east, literature is much more popular and respectable among men than it commonly is in the state universities. At Harvard, English is one of the two or three fields in which concentration is heaviest (Harvard, 456; Radcliffe, 204).

The most obvious difference between the study of English (or any subject) at Harvard (and almost all American colleges) and at Oxford or Cambridge is that at the English universities work with one's tutor is the main or the whole thing and courses of lectures are an optional extra, while in American colleges lecture courses are the main or often the only thing. (Harvard has tutorial work in addition to lectures, but that will be noticed later.) The lecture method is dominant because it is an American tradition, because it is the least expensive way of teaching large numbers of students, and because many people believe firmly in its positive virtues. One may not be sure that the English tutorial can be said to be *ipso facto* a better educational instrument than the American lecture, since the value of each depends upon the quality of the individual, and not all tutors are zealous geniuses any more than all lecturers. While I have no personal knowledge of instruction at Oxford and Cambridge, many Harvard students have studied at one or the other, and they commonly report that lecturing at Harvard is in general much more effective.

However, the word 'lecture' is quite inadequate for the various methods of classroom teaching that go under that name. I. A. Richards or John Finley may lecture to 700 or 800 students in a general course in the humanities. Among courses that range from 300 to 450 are Shakespeare (Harry Levin, Alfred Harbage), modern American literature (H. M. Jones), the modern novel (Albert Guérard), and modern drama (Robert Chapman); these last two, by the way, cover European and not merely English-speaking writers. Expert lectures in these and other large courses need no defence; and even in these formal lecturing includes more or less *explication de texte*. In many smaller courses there may

be little or no lecturing. My own lecture courses—to mention what I know most about—range from about 60 to 150 students (they are on Spenser; the metaphysical poets; Milton; the romantic poets; Victorian poets), and they are all given with a running commentary on texts, with more or less discussion (if the size of the class permits) and only a rare excursus that might be called a bit of a lecture.

For the year 1958-59 something over 50 courses are offered in English literature. In some universities with large graduate schools there is a division between undergraduate and graduate work, and between undergraduate and graduate teachers, but there is not at Harvard. We all teach both kinds of students, and in courses below seminars the students are of quite mixed vintage. There are three levels. The floor is a body of courses for undergraduates, mainly surveys of periods; a few are on single writers (Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton). Such undergraduate courses usually have a sprinkling of graduates who want to fill in gaps. Then there is a layer of 'middle-group' courses which are primarily for graduates but commonly include a large number of juniors and seniors who are candidates for honours; these more advanced and more specialized courses range from Anglo-Saxon poetry to the Scottish Chaucerians, from Spenser to Joyce. At the top, for graduates only (and usually graduates in their second year), there are a dozen seminars, which take in from 8 to 12 students each. Subjects of seminars vary from year to year. This year's list comprises Old English Dialects, Chaucer, the Elizabethan stage, seventeenth-century religious prose, *Paradise Lost,* Fielding, Keats, Hazlitt, Dickens, theory and technique of realism, American-European literary relations, *Finnegan's Wake,* Faustianism, American romantic literature, Cooper, Dreiser.

Nearly all courses are half-year ones. They meet twice or, at the pleasure of the instructor, three times a week during a twelve-week term. Grades in a course are based on a three-hour final examination, along with whatever else—a paper or papers and/or an hour examination—an instructor may require. Seminars, which normally meet for two hours once a week, have papers but no examinations. One of Harvard's more blessed peculiarities is the so-called 'Reading Period' of ten days or more between the end of courses and the beginning of examinations, a time for

students to review their work and for instructors to catch up with arrears and carry on oral examinations. The regular teaching load is two courses a term—that is, from four to six hours a week.

Candidates for honours have had, in addition to their main work in courses, individual work with tutors; non-honours students have been tutored in small groups. (I use the present perfect tense because, with the year just beginning, all undergraduates are assumed to be candidates for honours until they prove their incapacity, and I don't know how tutorial work is to be adjusted.) Since the final general examinations cover the whole field of English literature, and since students cannot take enough courses to cover that field, tutorial work is given to periods and authors on which courses are not taken. (I should say that students prepare themselves on chosen topics in the various periods.) The tutors are advanced graduate students, instructors, and assistant professors. In addition to the final written examinations for undergraduate candidates for honours, there is a thesis of 10,000 words. Until lately all candidates for honours were given a one-hour oral examination, but the pressure of numbers has led to our having orals only for students whose total record is on the margins between *Cum laude, Magna cum Laude,* and *Summa cum Laude;* these labels correspond to third-class, second-class, and first-class honours. The department determines *Cum* and *Magna* degrees; *Summa* degrees are granted only by the whole faculty, which scrutinizes each record *in toto,* since a *Summa* requires high grades in fields outside the field of concentration, as well as A grades within the field.

Incompetence in the writing of English is not merely an American ailment; it has apparently become noticeable among students admitted of late years to the English universities. But it has been conspicuous in the United States because of the shortcomings of many high schools and the enormous numbers of students who go on to college. For a long time American colleges have had to put all or most freshmen through an elementary course in writing. At Harvard this course is not an adjunct of the English department (though many of the teachers are graduate students in English); it is an independent unit with its own director. On various levels above this required course are elective courses, within the English department, for students

who wish to pursue imaginative writing under criticism. These courses are given by such poets, novelists, and playwrights as Archibald MacLeish, Theodore Morrison, Albert Guérard, Robert Chapman, John Hawkes, and Monroe Engel. In the first three centuries of American history, graduates of Harvard were so predominant in literature, and Barrett Wendell's Bostonian vision was so restricted, that his *Literary History of America* was facetiously christened "the Literary History of Harvard College." In recent times still more authors have emerged in all parts of the country, though Harvard continues to attract or produce a notable proportion. Its most eminent literary alumnus—among the living—is of course T. S. Eliot.

It may be observed that Harvard has become co-educational in all but name. Radcliffe, the college for women, was from the beginning a separate institution, though Harvard lectures were repeated there and Radcliffe students took Harvard examinations. But, when the second world war depleted Harvard, Radcliffe kept the faculty going, and since then classes, except in some freshman courses, have been merged. Radcliffe students hold their own in grades, and, although some misogynists gloomily appeal to Gresham's Law, the large feminine contingent has not had the effect of driving men into non-literary fields. On a higher level, along with the many important books that have come from men with a Harvard Ph.D. might be mentioned such a signally able and successful outgrowth of a Radcliffe thesis as Joyce Hemlow's recent *History of Fanny Burney*.

Many graduates of Harvard as of other colleges go directly—or after military service—into business, journalism, and the like, but a very high proportion go on to professional schools, at Harvard and elsewhere. It is a pleasant fact that concentrators in English are welcomed at the Harvard Medical School and the Harvard Law School, along with concentrators in biochemistry and government and economics. The fact is a reminder that one could wish many more students entered upon the graduate study of English after concentration in something else (my own undergraduate work, at the University of Toronto was in classics); a Harvard College graduate with a *Summa* or *Magna* already has a considerable professional knowledge of English.

Graduate students come to Harvard from all sections of this country and from many other countries. Since the B.A. degree, like the high school certificate, represents a wide diversity of standards, and since there are in the United States hundreds of degree-granting colleges, selection of graduate students is not easy. After the second world war, our department, like other parts of the graduate school, was accepting about one out of five or six applicants, and even then was flooded. That tide has now ebbed, and the practice of 'shopping around' for fellowships at various graduate schools has been somewhat curbed so that the pressure of numbers is less heavy, though still heavy enough; the English department, I believe, receives more applications than any other department of the graduate school. We admit about fifty a year, and ten or twelve at Radcliffe. One perennial and increasingly acute problem is the finding of money for fellowships adequate in both number and size, since graduate students usually have next to no funds. Nowadays, to be sure, many have wives who take jobs while their husbands take a degree; but some wives have babies to look after, and some graduates have no wives to look after them. Most students, in their second year and later, eke out subsistence with assistantships and teaching fellowships, which are good as experience but unduly protract the three years supposedly required for a Ph.D. Still others have to break off graduate work and take teaching posts elsewhere for a while, carrying on theses at long range, with maximum inconvenience to themselves and their advisers.

The Ph.D. programme has until the present required two years of more or less advanced courses, but now this requirement is being relaxed to allow, after the first half-year, for more individual work on the student's own responsibility. By the end of the third half-year candidates must have passed written examinations in the translating of three foreign languages: either Latin or Greek, and two of French, German, and Italian. The passing of eight half-courses a year with grades of A in at least half of them has not served well enough to weed out the incompetent from the competent, and at various times the department has had, or not had, a qualifying examination in English at the end of the first year. At the moment it is resuming such an examination: five hours on four periods of English literature

(the Middle Ages; 1500-1660; 1660-1800; 1800-the present), American literature counting as a fifth. The M.A. degree, which has, because of our preoccupation with the doctorate, tended to be neglected, will be granted to students who pass this qualifying examination and at least six half-courses, and who show satisfactory knowledge of two foreign languages.

After — often too long after — the completion of course requirements, Ph.D. candidates have an oral examination of two hours by three members of the department. According to the latest rules, just now being put into force, one hour is to be given to the student's special period; the other to anything in English or American literature members of the committee wish to bring up. Shortly before the oral the student will have a one-hour written examination in which he will explicate a passage. After these hurdles, the student is free to work on his thesis. It normally runs from 300 to 450 pages. It is written under the joint supervision of two advisers, so that it is presumably acceptable when finished. There is some feeling that the thesis bulks more largely in the Ph.D. programme than the subsequent facts of the writer's teaching life warrant, and it may in the future be somewhat reduced in size and scope. Since the second world war, Harvard seems to have turned out more Ph.D.s in English than any other American university; that is neither a boast nor a confession. Sneers at the American Ph.D. mill, and at American literary scholarship in general, which appear so often in English periodicals, seem to come chiefly from unscholarly amateurs and from scholars who resent the fact that leadership in English studies has passed to the United States.*

Since I came to Harvard as a graduate student in 1921, radical changes have taken place in the character and direction of graduate work, changes that have gone on more or less over the country at large. I, as a student, was so submerged in Gothic and other compulsory linguistic courses, and in the writing of a thesis (which at that time was done along with a full programme of courses before, not after, the oral), that I had next to no time for courses in literature; one consequence is that I have been wondering ever since how English is or should be taught. In those days also it was a matter of course that a

*The Editorial Board does not necessarily endorse this challenging statement.—Editor.

thesis was a piece of mainly factual research in literary history, the tracing of sources and the like. Nowadays, apart from foreign languages, we have no linguistic requirements, not even in Anglo-Saxon. And purely literary research, in the old sense, has largely given way to studies in the history of ideas and interpretative and critical analysis generally — a kind of writing directly related to the writer's main function of teaching. The character of oral examinations has undergone a parallel shift. This is not to say that essential elements of the older discipline have disappeared; bibliographical training, for instance, has been amply kept up by the late Hyder Rollins and by William A. Jackson, the head of the Houghton Library (the collection of rare books).

One other general remark may be made — or will be made, since many other remarks might be. That is, that the English department at Harvard is wholly individualistic and does not constitute a 'school' like the Aristotelians at the University of Chicago or the predominant mixture of eighteenth-century scholarship and 'new criticism' at Yale. The various members of the Harvard department represent traditional historical scholarship, the history of ideas, the new criticism, psychological criticism, formalism, symbolism, comparative literature (this last is in the hands of a separate semi-department closely related to English). Everyone goes his own way, and students, if at first befuddled by sometimes contradictory creeds, can hardly fail to find teachers they cleave to or react against. In American colleges and universities in general, professors tend to be specialists in this or that period; at Harvard, while we all know more about some things than about others, we are perhaps less confined to periods than men are at a good many institutions (as the partial list of my own courses, above, may serve to suggest). Our present chairman, Professor W. J. Bate, for example, has written with equal authority on Dr Johnson and Keats and the philosophy of Coleridge; and a roll-call of the department would indicate much the same sort of thing all along the line.

This sketch of the operations of the department of English has been largely and necessarily given to machinery, and has not dwelt upon the various kinds of divine fire that may be assumed to animate its members. But the shortest sketch would

have a large gap if it did not take account of Harvard's unique library facilities, which benefit faculty and students alike—and a continuous stream of workers from outside. The University Library has 84 units, from the central Widener Library of $2\frac{1}{2}$ million books down to the working libraries in the various Houses in which students live. The undergraduate Lamont Library has 108,000 books on open shelves (and a Poetry Room with recorded readings by a multitude of poets). Radcliffe students use their own library but have free access to Harvard libraries—except Lamont, which remains the one unbreached citadel of the male. The Houghton Library of rare books, mentioned already, has grown rapidly and richly under the magical hand of W. A. Jackson; the Keats room is one special shrine. The total number of books in the various units is over six million. The student of English—or of anything else—is very seldom compelled to go or send elsewhere for any book; and the all-round supply of secondary books and periodicals is far greater than it is in such famous libraries of original texts as the Folger and the Huntington.

THE POETIC DRAMA OF T. S. ELIOT

M. JARRETT-KERR

I

TO appreciate the problem facing, not merely Mr Eliot, but any poetic dramatist of the twentieth century, we need to go a little way back. Here are a few quotations which seem relevant:

> How comes this hair undone?
> Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
> And yet I tied it fast. — O, horrible!
> The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
> Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
> And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
> Slide giddily as the world reels . . . My God!
> The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
> The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
> Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
> In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
> A clinging, black, contaminating mist
> About me . . .

This is not merely reckless indulgence in the romantic *frisson*; for that might be justified by the circumstances of the play. It is the formlessness of matter as well as of manner to which we react. If this passage be thought unfair and unrepresentative, here is another, also from *The Cenci,* in quieter mood. Beatrice has been condemned; Lucretia urges her to trust in God:

> BEATRICE
> Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
> And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
> How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I
> Have met with much injustice in this world;
> No difference has been made by God or man,
> Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
> Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
> I am cut off from the only world I know,
> From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.

Notice the limpness, the looseness of the blank verse — loose where it should be taut. (And this is not another 'debunking' of

Shelley; there are times—as Dr Donald Davie has shown, convincingly I think, in his famous essay on "Shelley's Urbanity"[1]—when Shelley's loose, conversational verse is admirable for its purpose, as in *Julian and Maddalo.)* But one gets the impression, in blank verse drama of this sort, that either the verse has taken control and is pushing the author around, or, more frequently, that it is being used clumsily, *faute de mieux*; to change the metaphor, the dramatic poet feels he is not properly dressed for the party unless he has his blank verse singing robes around him—but alas, they are too big for him and he looks a little ridiculous in their baggy folds.

I could go on quoting rather similar passages from the nineteenth century—*Otho the Great, The Borderers,* or from any of Byron's plays (which are probably the most generally successful in this *genre*). I will content myself with two from Coleridge, since I fancy his plays are not much read. First, for sheer bathos, from *The Death of Wallenstein* (Coleridge's translation of Schiller—a translation highly praised in its time.) General Butler has just been telling Gordon (Governor of Egra) that Wallenstein (Duke of Friedland) is a traitor.

GORDON

Of such high talents! What is human greatness!
A traitor to the Emperor—such a noble!
I often said, this can't end happily.
His might, his greatness, and this obscure power,
Are but a covered pit-fall. The human being
May not be trusted to self-government.
The clear and written law, the deep-trod footmarks
Of Ancient custom are all necessary
To keep him in the road of faith and duty.

No comment is required on that. For the more typically 'romantic' straining, pulling and tugging, we have this (from *Remorse,* 1797, performed at Drury Lane 1813.) Alhadra, the Amazon of the play, a Muslim enthusiast, muses in the mountains by moonlight.

ALHADRA

Yon hanging woods, that touched by autumn seem
As they were blossoming hues of fire and gold;

[1] D. Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (London, 1952), p. 141-144.

The flower-like woods, most lovely in decay,
The many clouds, the sea, the rock, the sands,
Lie in the silent moonshine: and the owl,
(Strange! very strange!) the scritch-owl only wakes!

. . .

I need the sympathy of human faces,
To beat away this deep contempt for all things,
Which quenches my revenge. Oh! would to Alla,
The raven, or the sea-mew, were appointed
To bring me food! or rather that my soul
Could drink in life from the universal air!
It were a lot divine in some small skiff
Along some Ocean's boundless solitude,
To float for ever with a careless course
And think myself the only being alive!

The verse is dreadful — the frequent feminine endings give the impression of a lady lounging on the stoep at midday in her dressing-gown with her hair undone. But what is surprising is how long this sort of thing lasted — and we remember that Coleridge was a great poet and an even greater critic. My last quotation will be from the beginning of this century. I do not know how many people read Stephen Phillips to-day. (He sometimes manages to produce a not unimpressive line.) But the most extravagant claims were made for him in his day. Of the play from which I shall quote, *Paolo and Francesca,* Churton Collins said: "It unquestionably places Mr. Phillips in the first rank of modern dramatists and of modern poetry. It does more, it claims his kinship with the aristocrats of his art: with Sophocles and with Dante." Paolo has fallen in love with Francesca, his brother Giovanni's fiancée, and at last plucks up courage to admit it.

PAOLO (*to Francesca*)
What can we fear, we two?
O God, Thou seest us Thy creatures bound
Together by that law which holds the stars
In palpitating cosmic pattern bright;
By which the very sun enthrals the earth,
And all the waves of the world faint to the moon.
Even by such attraction we two rush

Together through the everlasting years.
Us then, whose only pain can be to part,
How wilt Thou punish? For what ecstasy
Together to be blown about the globe!
What rapture in perpetual fire to burn
Together! Where we are is endless fire.[2]

Any success such lines may have is derivative — has not been worked for. And the verse itself, as in the earlier examples, is trying to achieve the freedom and suppleness of late Shakespeare without having been through the discipline of (say) *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* let alone of *The Merchant of Venice* or (still less) the *Sonnets.* Perhaps this gives us an idea of what any twentieth-century poetic dramatist with a good ear had to bull-doze out of the way before he could start building anything.

II

Paolo and Francesca appeared in 1903. Less than thirty years later, 1932, we suddenly hear a very different accent:

Under the bamboo
Bamboo bamboo
Under the bamboo tree
Two live as one
One live as two
Two live as three
Under the bam
Under the boo
Under the bamboo tree.[3]

Though Pereira pays the rent, Doris doesn't want him, so when he rings she tells Dusty to choke him off.

DUSTY

Hello Hello are you there?
Yes this is Miss Dorrance's *flat*—
Oh Mr Pereira is that you? how do you do?
Oh I'm *so* sorry. I *am* so sorry
But Doris came home with a terrible chill
No, just a chill
Oh I think it's only a chill . . .

[2] Stephen Phillips, *Paolo and Francesca* (London, 1900), p. 111-112.
[3] T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (London, 1936), p. 127-128.

She says will you ring up on Monday
She hopes to be all right on Monday
I say do you mind if I ring off now
She's got her feet in mustard and water
I said I'm giving her mustard and water
All right, Monday you'll phone through . . .[4]

That is from the *Prologue*. Then we have the *Fragment of an Agon*, when Sweeney threatens to carry off Doris to a cannibal isle.

SWEENEY

Yes I'd eat you!
In a nice little, white little, soft little, tender little,
Juicy little, right little missionary stew . . .[5]

Sweeney Agonistes is only a fragment, and of an Aristophanic melodrama at that; but the comedy *à la* Aristophanes is preceded by two quotations which are significant for all Eliot's drama. One is from the *Choephoroe*—Orestes crying "You don't see them, you don't—but I see them: they are hunting me down, I must move on." This is the second play of Aeschylus's trilogy, when Orestes has just slain his mother, Clytemnestra, and is now pursued by the Furies. So already we have a hint that behind the comedy of Dusty and Doris prognosticating from playing cards, and Sweeney singing cave-man music-hall songs, or telling macabre stories about a man who did a girl in, there is a very serious theme of revenge and remorse. And the other quotation is from St John of the Cross — "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings." And that is what lies behind

SWEENEY

You'd be bored.
Birth, and copulation, and death.
That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:
Birth, and copulation, and death.
I've been born, and once is enough.

(This is almost a direct quotation from Sophocles)

You don't remember, but I remember,
Once is enough.[6]

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[4] ibid., p. 120.
[5] ibid., p. 126.
[6] ibid., p. 127.

And it even lies behind the apparently frivolous theme, and metre, of:

> When you're alone in the middle of the night and you wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright
> When you're alone in the middle of the bed and you wake like someone hit you on the head
> You've had a cream of a nightmare dream and you've got the hoo-ha's coming to you.
> Hoo hoo hoo
> You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock and it's foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark
> And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you know the hangman's waiting for you.
> And perhaps you're alive
> And perhaps you're dead
> Hoo ha ha . . .[7]

III

Of course, *Sweeney Agonistes* is not very important in itself, but only as an indication of the bull-dozing process—of what is likely to happen when a poet who has written poems as different as *Gerontion* and *The Hippopotamus* turns to the stage.

What first happened on a major scale was actually something surprising: *The Rock* (1934), commissioned as a pageant play for the London Diocesan Appeal for new churches. Some of the choruses in this are effective, but, as one would expect of a Pageant, there is no drama, merely some action-scenes, interspersed with static blocks of choric verse, which provide comment but inhibit movement. And unfortunately even some of these seem to me on the level of the Vicar's editorial in the parish magazine deploring modern civilization and the empty pews. In London

> I was told: we have too many churches,
> And too few chop-houses. There I was told:
> Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church
> In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays.
>
> In the City, we need no bells:
> Let them waken the suburbs.

[7] ibid., p. 132.

I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:
We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor
To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.
If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the papers.
In industrial districts, there I was told
Of economic laws.
In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed
That the country now is only fit for picnics.
And the Church does not seem to be wanted
In country or in suburb; and in the town
Only for important weddings.[8]

Perhaps the weakness and banality can best be brought out by printing it, a little unfairly, as prose:

> And now you live dispersed on ribbon roads, and no man knows or cares who is his neighbour unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance, but all dash to and fro in motor-cars, familiar with the roads and settled nowhere. Nor does the family even move about together, but every son would have his motor cycle, and daughters ride away on casual pillions.[9]

IV

Perhaps the most interesting development in *The Rock* is the long, usually choric, line:

> In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light. We are glad when the day ends, when the play ends; and ecstasy is too much pain.
>
> We are children quickly tired: children who are up in the night and fall asleep as the rocket is fired; and the day is long for work or play.
>
> We tire of distraction or concentration, we sleep and are glad to sleep,
>
> Controlled by the rhythm of blood and the day and the night and the seasons . . .[10]

[8] ibid., p. 157-158.
[9] ibid., p. 164.
[10] ibid., p. 180.

We see this same development in his next major dramatic experiment, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), in such choruses as:

> We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in all the creatures of the earth,
> In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in the storm; in all of Thy creatures, both the hunters and the hunted.
> For all things exist only as seen by Thee, only as known by Thee, all things exist
> Only in Thy light . . .[11]

I need quote no more in this kind: they are well known. But it is interesting to ask: what is their pedigree? Perhaps it is two-sourced. First, listen to this:

> Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth
> In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the farmers preparing their crops,
> In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests . . .
> Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and women . . .
> . . . lo, then and there,
> Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
> Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
> And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

And that leads to a brief doxology, not unlike some of Eliot's choruses—though to a very different end:

> Prais'd be the fabulous universe,
> For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
> And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
> For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death. . .

That is from *When Lilacs Last*. I do not know its exact date, but the author, Walt Whitman, died in 1892—ten years before the play of Stephen Phillips I quoted in my first section. I am not, of course, trying to compare Eliot and Whitman for content, but for verse-form, and occasionally for something of the mood.

Perhaps closer to Eliot's long-lined choruses lies the verse drama of another poet, this time French, who at any rate has

[11] T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London, 1938), p. 85-86.

some religious affinities with Eliot—the late M. Paul Claudel. Here is a passage, taken at random, from *La Jeune Fille Violaine,* written the year Whitman died (the first version: it later became the more famous *L'Annonce Faite à Marie.*) Anne Vercors, the old peasant, returns to his house after a long absence; he comes in through the window and looks around:

> —Je reconnais la vielle salle—Salut, maison!
>
> Voici que le maître reviens.
>
> Allons! tout est propre et bien rangé. Et j'ai vu les champs et le jardin, et mon coeur s'est rempli de joie car j'ai reconnu
>
> L'homme bien sage et subtil.
>
> Je suis arrivé hier, et je marchais regardant le soir, comme quelqu'un qui fixe les yeux sur une chute d'eau . . .
>
> Tout dort, et la pâle Cassiopée brille au-dessus des charrues abandonnées.
>
> Je te salue, pays! la terre aux nombreux grisards que protègent St. Marie et St. Crépin.
>
> Et la terre est difficile, mais elle rend une large moisson.
>
> Et toujours je me souvenais du vent! Car sans fin il souffle de la plaine, ébranlant les vastes noyers! Combernon, haute demeure!
>
> Allons! qui trouverai-je ici? Voici que le maître rentre tout à coup et comme un voleur, ayant forcé la fenêtre.[12]

Murder in the Cathedral is I think a *tour de force*—Eliot could never bring it off again. These long choruses, especially, depend upon their distance from us, their suggestion of liturgical *stasis* (and it is relevant that all commentators on Claudel have noted the affinity of his long-lined poetry with the Bible, especially the *Psalms.)* And the temptation and triumph of Beckett get their depth from the whole theological background—Church-and-State, Sin-and-Grace. The play's chief weakness is that it is a little too obviously a comedy—though of course Eliot doesn't call it that. I don't mean because of the comic speeches, in excellent, flat, political-meeting prose, by the four Knights; but the fact that, in spite of the Fourth Temptation and the apparent victory

[12] Paul Claudel, *Théâtre* (Paris, 1956), Vol. I, p. 552.

over it, Thomas remains too much in control—almost, dare we say, smug. At any rate we never, do we, think of him as a *victim*?

> We have only to conquer
> Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory.

I shall not discuss the interesting problem, whether there can be such a thing as a 'Christian Tragedy'. Corneille's *Polyeucte* is the most famous attempt to achieve one, but it gives us a very defiant, aggressive kind of Christianity. If Tragedy is to have any continuity with its Greek forms, perhaps no play on Beckett, just as no play on St Joan, could be a tragedy. But the 'happy ending' which eternity (and canonization in particular) affords should, one feels, be a little bit more gratuitous ('of grace') and unexpected: if you like, Comedy should be the sudden twist that turns genuine Tragedy upside-down. (I note that the Italian composer, Ildebrando Pizzetti, has just turned *Murder in the Cathedral* into an Opera. It is an index of the power, but also of the limitations, of the play that it probably would suffer less damage than any others of Eliot's by the transformation.)[13]

V

Still, we are not now living in the age of Beckett or Joan. And so, for the next three plays (and presumably the forthcoming *The Elder Statesman)* we leave the long choric line and the Christian society, and move into the short, mostly four- or five-stress lines, and the post-Christian order. Eliot has in his admirable Theodore Spencer lecture, *Poetry and Drama* (1950), described the evolution of the verse he uses in these plays: how pleased he is when people in the audience don't realize it is poetry at all; how Shakespeare too (Eliot quotes admirable examples from *Hamlet,* and in another essay, from *Romeo and Juliet*) does not just force poetry down our throat, but seduces us by easy, 'prosaic-sounding', conversational verse, and then by subtle stages woos us on till we are ready to accept the cadences and the rich imaginative language of 'poetic-sounding' verse. But of course more is needed to make a play than this sort of deliberate poetry-inducing campaign. And the problem is: once you leave history and pageant and write about the twentieth

[13] See *The Listener,* 20 March 1958.

century, how will you avoid merely becoming another Noel Coward or Terence Rattigan? If you conceal the verse too carefully, you will sound like any other West End comedy; if you obtrude it, will it not sound absurd from characters in dinner-jackets or jeans? (I suspect, by the way, that *Murder in the Cathedral,* done in modern dress would seem more ridiculous than Julius Caesar or Lear in modern dress. Is this an unfair way of comparing the relative universality of Eliot and Shakespeare?)

Eliot has tried to solve this problem in two ways. First, by concealing the poetry fairly thoroughly, but letting it pop out occasionally. In *Family Reunion* the poetry 'surfaces' quite often, and even in several places emerges as choric verse; in *The Cocktail Party* it appears openly only on a few occasions—and on the most notable occasion it isn't Eliot's poetry but a longish quotation from *Prometheus Unbound*; in *The Confidential Clerk* the poetry remains almost wholly submarine. The second way is by contriving to give the smart, slick surface of the verse a background or a sounding-board. In *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral* it was Christendom; in these plays it is Greek myth. But like the poetry, the myth has become progressively submerged. In *Family Reunion* the Orestes theme is fairly obtrusive—even if in the production the Furies at the window are left out altogether. One remembers Eliot's difficulty with them:

> We tried every possible manner of presenting them. We put them on the stage, and they looked like uninvited guests who had strayed in from a fancy-dress ball. We concealed them behind gauze, and they suggested a still out of a Walt Disney film. We made them dimmer, and they looked like shrubbery just outside the window. I have seen other experiments tried: I have seen them signalling from across the garden, or swarming on to the stage like a football team, and they are never right. They never succeed in being either Greek goddesses or modern spooks. But their failure is merely a symptom of the failure to adjust the ancient with the modern.[14]

In *The Cocktail Party* nobody spotted, until Eliot gave the tip, that the psychologist Reilly's slightly tipsy song and his fondness

[14] T. S. Eliot, *Poetry and Drama* (London, 1951), p. 30.

for gin-and-water were really based on Hercules's drunken entry in the *Alcestis*. Hercules has called on his friend Admetus, not realizing that Admetus has just lost his wife, Alcestis, who nobly sacrificed her life for him. He is puzzled as to why the company do not join in his uproarious banqueting; when he realizes what has happened, he sobers up at once, and offers to go down to Hades and fetch Alcestis back—which he does. So Reilly shows Celia the way of self-sacrifice, she dies as a novice in a Missionary order (crucified on an ant-heap, for good measure) and wins her victory that way. Both plays are in a sense plays with a 'resurrection' or a 'victory through death' theme. However, the Greek parallel was too well hidden for people to spot it till told. In *The Confidential Clerk* the Greek legend lies deeper still. Again Eliot has given us the clue: that puzzling play, the *Ion,* lies at the back of it. *The Confidential Clerk* is about mistaken identity: a series of liaisons and illegitimate children lead to comic complications—and lead to more serious questions about the meaning of 'identity': what is a person? How do I know who I am, if I don't know who my mother and father were? If I am taken out of my class and adopted, or married, into another class, do I change, or am 'I' still 'I'? The *Ion* does not exactly raise *these* questions: but its theme is similar: the hero (Ion) is employed in Apollo's temple and does not know whose son he is—perhaps he is "the record of a woman's wrong", i.e. the issue of some rape. Creusa, who is Ion's mother by Apollo, but does not know it, comes to consult the oracle as to why she and her husband, Xutheus, are childless. Xutheus comes also to the oracle, and thinks that Ion is *his* natural son—by some Delphian girl in the revels. Creusa is angry that her husband should have had a son this way without telling her; she plans revenge by poisoning this Ion. The plot is discovered, and Ion and the whole court pursue Creusa to punish her with death. Fortunately, at the last minute Creusa discovers that Ion is her son (she knew she had had a child by the God, but it had been taken away from her at birth.) Finally Athene appears to placate everybody (though not to explain what Euripides really meant in this strange, half-cynical, half-serious play). The parallel with *The Confidential Clerk* is obvious when worked out. Colby Simpson, supposed illegitimate son of Sir Claude Mulhammer, is taken on by Sir Claude as his confidential clerk, in the hope

that Elizabeth, Lady Mulhammer, not knowing his origin, will adopt him. Colby is an unsuccessful musician, and his 'father', Sir Claude, a disappointed potter. But Sir Claude also has an illegitimate daughter, Lucasta Angel, whom he is hoping will soon be off his hands and happily married to B. Kaghan. Colby has been brought up by his aunt, Mrs Guzzard. Lady Elizabeth soon finds this out, and the name rings a bell. She (Lady Elizabeth) now announces that Colby is *her* long-lost (illegitimate) child! Sir Claude now has to tell the truth. No, Colby is his son. They argue about whose illegitimate son he really is; finally they are satisfied not to know—but Colby himself is not satisfied: he will not have established his identity till he knows which of them is his real parent. So Mrs Guzzard is sent for, and she reveals that she had adopted an unknown boy—but when payments had ceased, had got him adopted by neighbours and called Kaghan. So now it is B. Kaghan, and not Colby, who is really Lady Elizabeth's son! She also reveals that Colby is not the son of Sir Claude either, but of Herbert Guzzard ('a disappointed musician'—an echo, surely, of Apollo, Ion's father) and herself; her sister, who was pregnant by Sir Claude, died before her child could be born, so Mrs Guzzard lets Sir Claude think that her little Colby was his and her sister's child. Colby is relieved to know the truth, even if it makes him lowly-born; and goes off to become a church organist. Euripides's play is complicated, but it is nothing to the complication of Eliot's.

VI

What are we to say about these three plays? To start with the last: *The Confidential Clerk* seems to me almost a total failure. Lady Elizabeth with her vegetarianism, astrology, and thought-control, is the only live character—there is good comedy when she is on. But the rest are unreal. When Colby and Sir Claude discuss the meaning of personal identity, the nature of failure in life etc., that discussion is evidently intended to provide the nodal point of the play: but their language is flat and academic. Here is a brief extract, printed as prose. Sir Claude asks Colby, his 'son' (as he thinks), how he feels now that he has this secretarial job. Colby says:

> It gives me, in a way, a kind of self-confidence I've never had before. Yet at the same time it's rather

> disturbing. I don't mean the work: I mean about myself. As if I was becoming a different person. Just as, I suppose, if you learn to speak a foreign language fluently, so that you can think in it—you feel yourself to be rather a different person when you're talking it."

This, it seems to me, might have come straight out of *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*; but it hasn't much to do with poetic drama. Or this, from a passage that is intended, I think, to be pitched in a more exalted key—but is no more successful:

> COLBY
>
> You know, I think that Eggerson's garden is more real than mine . . . He retires to his garden—literally, and also in the same sense that I retire to mine. But he doesn't feel alone there. And when he comes out he has marrows, or beetroot, or peas . . . for Mrs Eggerson . . . What I mean is, my garden's no less unreal to me than the world outside it. If you have two lives which have nothing whatever to do with each other—well, they're both unreal. But for Eggerson his garden is part of one single world . . . If I were religious, God would walk in my garden and that would make the world outside it real and acceptable, I think.[16]

The trouble is that Colby is just the sort of person who would talk in this sententious way; but that does not make him worth taking an interest in.

The Cocktail Party is more successful, but is spoilt, I think, by two things in particular. First, the two 'ways of salvation' are not commensurate. The way in which Edward and Lavinia settle down to 'make the best of a bad job' is dramatically weak, because it has not been worked for hard enough and therefore comes as an anti-climax after the more spectacular 'way' of Celia's martyrdom. In fact, one way is too flat, the other too melodramatic. (Miss Helen Gardner put it well, in a review in *Time & Tide,* which I quote from memory—namely, that "For the classic conception of sanctity Mr Eliot has substituted the romantic conception of martyrdom," or words to that effect.) And secondly, the crucial account of Celia's condition contains

[15] T. S. Eliot, *The Confidential Clerk, A Play* (London, 1954), p. 38.
[16] ibid., p. 152-153.

one feels, a little too much wagging of the finger at the audience, improving kind of innuendoes, if not actually rather prosy preaching.

> CELIA (*to Reilly*)
>
> Well, my bringing up was pretty conventional—I had always been taught to disbelieve in sin. Oh, I don't mean that it was ever mentioned! But anything wrong, from our point of view, was either bad form, or was psychological. And bad form always led to disaster because the people one knew disapproved of it. I don't worry much about form, myself—but when everything's bad form, or mental kinks, you either become bad form, and cease to care, or else, if you care, you must be kinky.[17]

This might have come from *Thoughts after Lambeth* or *After Strange Gods*. And, like *The Confidential Clerk, The Cocktail Party* has a further weakness, that the characters seem to have no history, therefore no depth: and the Greek classical background is not organic enough to it to provide the necessary strength—or, to change the mixed metaphor, to act as the necessary 'reverberator'.

The best that can be said for these two plays has been said by Dr Leonard Unger[18] who maintains that they show "a growing interest in the common lot and the ordinary reality," and a waning emphasis "on the isolated individual and the ineffable reality." That is true, but does not in itself make them good plays. Indeed, they seem to me to present the old problem: how can one write really convincingly about boredom without being supremely boring?

But this is precisely why *The Family Reunion* seems to me, in spite of Eliot's own disclaimers, the best play he has written: for here background and foreground are fully related—the Greek theme is part and parcel of Wishwood. Even the Furies can, in my experience, be taken as an inevitable and convincing part of Harry's world: I don't believe that Eliot's problems in putting them in a play are any more intractable than some of the supernatural machinery of Euripides. And I have not found any harsh jump from the easy, urbane, conversational verse to the stilted

[17] T. S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party* (London, 1950), p. 120.
[18] L. Unger, *The Man and the Name* (Minneapolis, 1956).

choric-speaking and stychomythia of the uncles and aunts. I do not agree with Eliot that Harry Monchensey is a prig and Aunt Amy the only really sympathetic character (though Amy is unquestionably fine). And I think that there is a further reason for the play's success: just as *Murder in the Cathedral* carries echoes of *Ash Wednesday,* so *The Family Reunion* carries echoes of the *Four Quartets.* If one is looking for really powerful and dramatic handling of modern verse dialogue, I hardly see where it can be bettered than in the tense conversation between Harry and Aunt Agatha (II, ii). Harry, it will be remembered, thinks that he has killed his wife by pushing her overboard—at any rate he has wished her death; and now he is pursued by guilt (the Furies). He fancies that there is more behind it than merely his own personal culpability; and that his Aunt Agatha is probably the only one who can throw light on it. And slowly it comes out:

AGATHA

I remember
A summer day of unusual heat
For this cold country . . . (And then)
The autumn came too soon, not soon enough.
The rain and wind had not shaken your father
Awake yet. I found him thinking
How to get rid of your mother. What simple plots!
He was not suited to the role of murderer . . .
You were due in three months time;
You would not have been born in that event: I stopped him.
I can take no credit for a little common sense,
He would have bungled it.
I did not want to kill *you*!
You to be killed! What were you then? Only a thing called 'life'—
Something that should have been mine, as I felt then.[19]

And so Harry realizes that Agatha loved his father; and that his father's guilt (for a desired murder) has been repeated in him. But this realization is itself a sort of purgation: perhaps

[19] T. S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion* (London, 1939), p. 102-104.

after all he (Harry) "only dreamt I pushed her" overboard. And now he can meet the Furies without fear.

(The Eumenides appear)

HARRY

and this time
You cannot think that I am surprised to see you.
And you shall not think that I am afraid to see you.
This time, you are real, this time, you are outside me,
And just endurable. I know that you are ready,
Ready to leave Wishwood, and I am going with you.
You followed me here, where I thought I should escape you—
No! you were already here before I arrived.
Now I see at last that I am following you,
And I know that there can be only one itinerary
And one destination. Let us lose no time. I will follow.[20]

Finally at the end of the play the cry of Amy from within—"The clock has stopped in the dark," and Dr Warburton's simple "Excuse me" as he goes out to tend to her—these are fine pieces of stage-work and (like Clytemnestra's death off-stage) essentially Greek.

VII

Eliot's plays swing between those two quotations at the head of *Sweeney Agonistes*: Orestes pursued by the Furies, and St John of the Cross's way to the divine union by stripping off the love of created beings. Sometimes one has cause to fear that Eliot never had much love of created beings anyway, and so has few clothes to take off. For certain kinds of poetry (perhaps for the *Four Quartets*) this is all right. But for drama there must be lust and love; or, if neither of these, then a Curse and a strong Fatality. In Eliot's unsuccessful plays (as I judge them) we are just not engaged, because he does not plunge deeply enough into us. But in his two great plays we do care deeply about the themes—about Beckett's integrity, and perhaps still more about the future of the poor women of Canterbury who suffer most and have no possible martyrdom to console them; about Harry's sanity and Agatha's extraordinary loneliness.

[20] ibid., p. 109.

And so we are ready in them to look, with Eliot himself, for the point where

> The knot shall be unknotted
> And the crooked made plain.

THOMAS CODJOE: A WEST AFRICAN ECCENTRIC

TOM HOPKINSON

> I was born on the 23rd of August, 1897, and may I with the pardon of my readers, state in this writing for the preservation of honest history that my parents were not tightfully poor like wolves locked up in unattended cages for a day's fasting. . .

WITH this sentence begins the autobiography of Thomas Codjoe of Accra in Ghana. It came to me in the course of my work as a journalist, and I found the sentence so astonishing that I at once determined to know more about the man who wrote it. A single sentence does not make a man a great writer; equally no man who has not some remarkable quality is capable of writing a fine sentence.

I learned without much difficulty that Codjoe is the author of a string of pamphlets, thought out, set up in type, printed and published by himself—and finally hawked by him through the streets of Accra. In his time he has poured forth dozens, perhaps hundreds, of such literary works, made up of one or two-page essays or disquisitions, on subjects ranging from the chemical contents of crocodile poison or instructions for manufacturing green ink, to courageous and penetrating comments on Ghanaian party politics, or a eulogy in honour of the Duchess of Kent.

The pamphlets are written in a style at the same time vivid and diffuse. The writer rambles easily over and around his subject, slips off it on to another, is led away by a third. It is only after several readings that one begins to think the connection between the subjects not entirely aimless.

Certain themes continually recur. The treatment of lime to produce chalk, and methods of manufacturing ink are two. The uselessness of academic knowledge is another. The sense of a personal connection with royalty, aristocracy, and with the mighty geniuses of the past is a fourth. Such a conviction of personal contact is easily ridiculed, but it has been felt by some in the laughter against whom history has not joined. And when

Codjoe told me, speaking of the Governor General of Ghana, "The Earl of Listowel being here calms my spirit," I was reminded of William Blake's:

> Egremont's Countess can controll
> The flames of Hell that round me roll.

He has also a close and touching sense of contact with England, though he has never been there, or indeed, outside West Africa.

But before attempting an assessment of this writer's scattered literary work—he possesses almost no copies of his own productions except the few for sale at any given moment, and no one I ever met has troubled to put together a collection—I wish to give some picture of the man himself.

* * *

It was a month or two after I had first heard his name and read a few of his sentences that I found myself, early in October 1958, in Ghana; and, at the first chance, I made my way to Korle Gonno, a fishing village suburb of Accra. On the corner of a peeling wall facing on to a dusty unmade road I saw painted in fading letters "KUSHARA PRESS, Printers, Publishers and Bookbinders." Behind the wall, a narrow strip of sand separated the road from a dilapidated but solid one-storied square grey house.

Thomas Codjoe is a slight wiry man in his early sixties with close grey hair, a mobile face which in repose looks surprised, as well as painfully exposed, and a finely-shaped sensitive mouth. His clothes are much stained from his habit of wiping his hands on them after inking the plates for printing. As we talked, his wife stood by with a protective air, and it was clear that he found in her that constant reassurance which the writer—or indeed any man—needs, who has chosen a life apart from and conflicting with the ideas and attitudes of his fellows.

Our conversation was not easy for I had chosen a day on which new locks were being fitted, and two young men were hammering ceaselessly against the wood just by our heads. The sight of a stranger made them hammer more violently to stress the importance of their work.

I asked Thomas Codjoe how he began to write, and what impelled him to write at all: "I don't have to write. I only sit

down, and it is like water flowing. Many, many books have been written in the air. I sit down and copy them like wireless. . . . I only hold my points. I check up on my points."

I took this to mean that he writes in full spate with little correction, but that he looks over his work afterwards to make sure he has dealt with the subject upon which he started out. But "writes" is in any case the wrong word, for Thomas Codjoe uses neither pen nor pencil. He composes directly into metal, setting his pamphlets up in type and printing them on a ramshackle press which he operates himself.

When he runs out of one size of type he continues without interruption in a different size. Headings to the same pamphlet will be set in Bodoni Extra Bold—a 'fat-face' type—or in the sort of elegant script that might be used for headings in a ladies' magazine. Accents are peppered at random over the vowels.

Despite these eccentricities, however, the pamphlets are neatly printed, containing as a rule thirty-two pages agreeably bound in thicker coloured paper—pink and blue, pink and yellow, pink and green, or whatever coloured papers he happens to have in stock. Below the title they carry the signs of the Zodiac enclosed in a circle, with the map of Africa on a shield, and the motto or inscription: CHRIST REX GEORGE BRITANNIA ESSE ILLI VOX CAPIO DII. From the author's Latin, as from his English, a general sense has to be gathered in passing without too pedantic a concern for grammar or detail.

When a number of the pamphlets have been printed, Thomas Codjoe puts on an old white pith helmet, walks into Accra, and takes his stand at a street corner. His face under the pith helmet wears an anxious, pleading expression. This is due, not to the author's concern with the passer-by's sixpence, but to his hope of making some contact with his mind; for he readily stops selling to argue with an interested listener.

The living gathered by this means must be on a mouse's scale; yet though the author stressed to me more than once that he needed 'capital' to expand his publishing, he refused to let me pay for any of his works and insisted on giving me copies of all he had in stock.

One other notable feature about the pamphlets. They all bear the wording: "by Dr. Thomas A. Codjoe, D. Sc., LL. D., V.O.,

D. Litt., M.A. (Lond.) Hons." The author has sat for no examinations. Nor has he ever been honoured by any University or learned society. His own explanation of the degrees is: "Each man is his own examiner. He must estimate his own worth and mental level. If he feels his knowledge is up to the level of a B.A., D. Sc., or Ph. D., he may justly attach these letters to his name."

Though he makes this assertion with conviction and simplicity, it seems not entirely to satisfy himself, or one of his selves, for—as we shall see in an examination of his pamphlets—the possession of degrees and the unworthiness of many who possess them, is a theme to which he constantly recurs.

I asked Thomas Codjoe how and why he had come to learn printing:

> Because the police threaten to jail my compositor. He is setting the type for me, and the police tell him he is to stop. They say the Government do not like my writings and that if he continues to set them, they will put him in prison. They are driving him away from me. So I say to the man: "You are working for me, not for the police. I give you the order. The police do not give you the order." But the man goes; the police have made him useless. So then I learn myself to set up type.

He learned to good purpose. In his ceaseless guerilla war against authority—or rather against what he feels to be the frequent injustice of authority—Thomas Codjoe for two years composed, set up, printed and published his own daily newspaper, *The Voice of Kushara.* Every day he also went out and sold it on the streets. Few men since Defoe can have worked so hard at the sheer business of writing and publication.

As we talked, the author's voice became changeable and varied as his face. Sometimes he chatted smoothly. At times he barked with schoolmaster's authority. Then, summoning up a deep and powerful note, he would chant as if calling to the hosts assembled on a hillside. "My godfathers in Europe had my voice. . . . I invoke my different souls from many lives."

When he chatted, he gave warm and friendly glances. At other times, drawing his chin down, he made his face long and, as it were, remote. Occasionally, in an entirely different

manner or as if from some different personality, he would flash a shrewd, percipient glance—to observe at the same time, I felt, both whether I were disposed to laugh or whether I were being taken in.

The imposing, deep-down voice was speaking: "When I leave the world they will know that an old man has passed. My head will not be on the coins. But the days will start from the first."

I noted the words down, and then looked up. "I've written it down" I said. "But I don't think I really understand it."

"What did I say?" he asked.

I read the sentence out. "I mean" he answered, "they will start to reckon time from the day when I am dead."

* * *

The outward facts about Thomas Codjoe's life are few and simple. In 1914, having passed the seventh standard examination at the age of seventeen, he got a job at 30/- a month with Swanzy's Lighterage Department. Dissatisfied with their modest rate of pay, he entered the Post and Telegraph service, serving in Accra and Mangoase. He writes:

> It is not too late to recollect that on the 18th of November (1918) I received instructions from the Postmaster General to proceed to Dodowah on transfer. It was well and good that I went there. Finding out that the town of Dodowah being more or less a solitary jungle like a town loaded with dead bodies, I sharpfully caught the hope that a social dancing club should be run in my name as a seedling of happiness in that notable village. . . . Dear good readers, forget not to note that the magical effect in the running of the social dancing gave an exhilarating clothing to the gloomy quietness of the town and this fact made me to remain in the service of the Post and Telegraph Department for practically seven years though I had the plan to resign earlier.
>
> I resigned from the service of the Post and Telegraphs on 31st December, 1921 and took to trade, but unfortunately some unscrupulous friends who could spend their wages before they received them, addressed red-ink-chits to me, asking me to give them two to four days' loans.

> It was not often the mistake of those friends. It might be my own careless conduct; that is to say, I used to tell some of those friends how much cash sales I had on hand which I would use to retire my thirty days sight drafts drawn on me by Messrs. Arthur Williams and Company of Preston Row, Liverpool, with whom I lodged one hundred pounds cash security. The friends were not men who respected their words, and four days took them four months in part payment of small sums, and this made my drafts to be over due in the Bank of British West Africa, Accra. . .
>
> When I lost almost all my capital in the trade, about six months after my wedding in 1927, things became like a company of untrained sailors without the aid of a mariner's compass sailing through vexful oceans.

In 1928, now jobless, Codjoe and his wife returned to Dodowah, where he started work as a baker—a trade in which he continued for some years with slender profit.

In about 1936 Codjoe left the Gold Coast and went to Nigeria where he travelled about for some three years. "It was when I was in Nigeria that I started writing, when I was working at schools." Here, too, took place his now celebrated quarrel with Dr Azikiwe, the present Prime Minister of Eastern Nigeria. 'Zik' had challenged 'Dr' Codjoe to declare the names of the universities that had awarded his degrees.

> "Don't you quarrel with me, my child," Thomas Codjoe warned his formidable antagonist. "Because when you challenge me, I take my pen and you are drowned."

In 1939 Codjoe returned to the Gold Coast and went to live in Koforidua, a small town on the main road fifty miles north of Accra, where he set up his first printing press. Here he stayed until in 1948 he felt drawn to Accra "because of politics—to check them." It was during the following two years that he wrote, printed and published *The Voice of Kushara,* his daily newspaper, single-handed.

The paper's policy was anti-C.P.P., the popular party which was soon to provide Ghana with its first independent government, and C.P.P. rowdies used to beat up the hawkers who, with Codjoe himself, went out to sell *The Voice*. This in part drove the paper

off the streets, but it also seems that—though Codjoe believes he registered *The Voice* as a newspaper—he forgot or failed to do so, thus leaving an excuse for it to be closed down.

While in Nigeria, he produced his only full-scale books *Cyclops Philosophy and Practical Key to Manhood* and *The Plays of Kushara.* "The two publications cost me sixty-five pounds." Both are now very difficult to obtain. Codjoe lives today a vigorously active life, making such living as he gets entirely by the production and sale of his own pamphlets. What are these like? What are their author's views and principles? And how far is he to be taken seriously?

* * *

In Ghana opinions range from regarding Codjoe as a lunatic to considering him a genius. Neither his published work nor personal acquaintance gives support to the former view, though it is natural that writers and journalists who have spent years learning to manipulate the English language correctly should be outraged when their efforts are surpassed by one who does nothing of the kind; who intersperses his works with a dog-Latin which would have made a mediaeval monk turn in his stall; and whose claims range from the award of his own degrees to an apparent identification of himself with Jesus, Jupiter, Shakespeare and Mahomet.

If, on the other hand, genius has anything to do with taking pains, with working over and polishing one's productions to the gloss of a Dryden, the matt finish of an Eliot, or the curiously-chased surface of a Joyce, then clearly Codjoe is not, and has no genius. He is a gushing spring, a natural fulminator, a writer who turns on the tap, or rather pulls out the plug from a cistern continually at overflow.

Those who attach importance to his work point, as a rule, to two qualities—his highly original and effective use of words, and his sharp political thrusts. Some go so far as to say that he is in essence a skilled political satirist, and that his instructions for manufacturing ink, scaring crows, or making use of the "crystallising stone naturally concealed between the leg and the knee" of "some big vultures," are merely the clown's cap and bells which ensure that his moments of truth are not seriously regarded.

An examination of a few pamphlets may help us to an assessment.

* * *

The pamphlet called *The Queen's Visit to Ghana* begins with a long reverberating sentence:

> It is seemingly visible in the signs of the rolling age in which many members of fortune tellers engage their luxuriant and most hallowed predictions on the adventures of a Sovereign Angel, in whose service it had pleased the Gods of airy parentage to help a prophet of Jesu wings to wake the dead conscience in Africans.

Part-way through comes a glimpse into the author's conception of human life: ". . . all living men are ghosts of good and evil spirits of many past kingdoms."

But this section ends with a direct appeal to the Queen to exercise her influence on the Ghana Government to stop imprisoning people without trial and deporting them on the vague charge that they "did something which is not conducive to public good."

Such sharp criticism is followed straightway by a section called "Agricultural Philosophy," which reads, like a good many others, as though an alchemist's handbook had been rewritten by Edward Lear.

A few pages later, however, our author is back on the political job again:

> It is mountainly strangeful in the law of elegant psychological graduates to think that the conduct of a goose is the conduct of a gander. O Geoffrey, O Geoffrey Bing,[1] it might be grossly improbable to assume the legal speculation that the conduct of a cat is the conduct of an ass, by Jove, my old Geoffrey, a Government which makes a law to bind the toothless to chew hot iron rods is like sinking ship. If stealing conduct, say stealing, if treason conduct, say treason, and so on.

Steering our way through a discourse on *Talismans and Lucky Rings*—which includes an offer to supply these at prices "from

[1] Geoffrey Bing, Q.C., a former Labour M.P. in the British Parliament, is the present Attorney General.

one guinea to twenty-five guineas" with "prayers responsible to compel even the spirits of arch angels to shield those who possess these astral signet arms"—and we touch hard land with a short comment on official extravagance:

> It is written in the laws of bandful logicians that state millionaires slip into thorny woes when they refuse to take vehement account of what their children spend per day. If the Premier Nkrumah & his hosts had travelled under national economic system of rule by taking one aeroplane to a station & joining another to a different port, the tour would have cost the taxpayers £2,000 instead of £22,000.
>
> Adding this sum to that of the conference, the two items run to £70,000 which venture slaps my sense to feel that unless the citizens in Ghana could, by the ambulance of magic, urine gold and diamond, the leaking pockets could crucify lazy trade.

The pamphlet ends with some medical advice whose efficacy I have not yet put to the test.

> By the magnetic penetration of the souls which are licenced per Providence to lead me in what I write, it is handed over to me that the chemical in fresh cotton-leaf could cure sores of chronic nature in the stomach, sore in the eyes, piles, chronic gonorrhoea, female-barreness subject to irregular menses, consumption, blood purification mixed with honey and cooked well.

* * *

A second pamphlet, *The Earl of Listowel,* opens with an extremely eloquent and moving prayer, to be followed by a piece called "The Threats of Krobo Edusei" (Minister of the Interior and the tough boy of Ghana politics: "I am a ruffian too" he told the troublesome Togolanders). A disquisition on the treatment of sores in horses leads us to the *Political Key of Saint George*:

> We who gave the parliamentary votes to the most pronounced & unbalanced stupid-headed ungrateful company of rogues to go & serve us as our obedient servants

at the national Assembly, are supertightfully surprised to note that our reward is imprisonment without lawful trial in the justice of democratic companionship in Jesus.

He who thinks he can imprison voters without trial, must be supremely beastful in manners to think that tomorrow, too, he can go & tell the same people he is going to imprison without trial, to shout freedom again.... if I slap a man & tell the same man to say freedom on top of my slapping him, he who continues to shout freedom after the slap is historified as a beast than all beasts in his conscience.

From a pamphlet happily rich in 'Beachcomber' passages, I will quote only one:

To dive behind the moon in an electrically propelled parachute satellite is remarkably easy if the heating instrument in the engine is fountained by twelve supplementary changes in automatic fluctuation of weathers in the thermometer which we used to test the temperature of invalids in Korle-Bu Hospital, Accra, Ghana.

* * *

The Astral Mouthpiece of Ghana begins with advice to Sir Aku Korsah who had lately been appointed Ghana's Acting Governor General:

The first and the most important advice I convoke in Jupiter to give you, is, do not care for black nor white.... If you draw too much fish for the black than the white notes, you shall miss a tuneful harmony in your governmental machine. . . . Do not offer too much fish to the white notes in the same rule. As for me, though I love the white man even as I love my own colour black, as I had sworn in spirit to die in the truth in Christ's own table of justice, I shall always dive deeper and deeper in the psychological laws of the Queen's Bench. . . .

Half-way through this pamphlet, in a section full of instruction for the use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture, we come suddenly on the passage:

This is not a time to go and lie down sleeping all night and keep on perambulating in the streets of Accra

> every morning shouting freedom, freedom with an empty belly. Those who take their hoes to the fields to sow a yam for half a day, and go to school to spend half of the same day to spell the names of yams and tomatoes will never die with hunger, but woe to those youth who can spend the whole day in a class room calling and spelling only the names of yams and garden eggs. Learn to go and plant the yam first before you go and spell its name; freedom shouting times are past but hungry, hungry times have set in. You can spell the name of yam million times a day but that cannot give you the yam to eat. Now, I am here to tell many people to hold their cutlasses fast and find a place to get their daily bread in the soil of Ghana. Many young men had thought that the Government can really give everybody a job. They had heard the lies and the lies shall not fill their empty bellies:— What part of the wide world can an honest Government tell everybody that any person can be given a job to do—.

Towards the end, again after much which to me appears inconsequent and confused, the direct question springs out of the pages:

> Have we an honest Government in Ghana? We have no honest men in the present Government. I had long ago predicted the fall of Nkrumah's Government to his dreaming followers in their swams of sleep. When Jibowu charged the Premier Nkrumah etc. for conniving and condonation, Nkrumah and his Ministers who were victims in this dishonest deal said the Members of the Parliamentary Opposition had bribed Jibowu. The liars had now confessed at the National Assembly that the stealing had now taken a big root in the C.P.C.[2] Kodwo Mercer was dismissed for speaking the truth and Aaron Ofori Atta and others who spoke the lie to back their friendly thieves were given promotions. The Government is down. Any earthly Government which dismisses men who speak the truth and retains the services of those who speak lies to help even a single person falls in the Laws of the Queen's Bench.

[2] Cocoa Purchasing Company.

In the last pages, however, under the heading "Geographical Psychology"—a typical Codjoe chapter heading—we are back among general observations on the nature of the universe:

> We have twelve principal bottomless holes under the ocean or sea, known in my philosophical writings as the salt banks of nature. These salt banks sometimes sips the sea at specific intervals, resultant in the observation that the sea appears to have a very low tide at the shore.

Is this, as some argue, skilled buffoonery? Or is it the casual overflow from a mind which exercises little selection over what it takes in, and spills out almost continuously whatever rises to the surface?

* * *

We could go on with profit—and for me at any rate with enjoyment—considering more of these strange, indeed unique, productions. But it is time to try and make an estimate of their author.

He is intensely political, and completely fearless in his denunciations, but he surrounds his attacks with clouds of distracting verbiage. Much of this, however, if we knew the intricacies of Ghanaian politics, might prove to be not sheer distraction but parable, with a highly ironic application.

What particularly arouses his indignation is that legalized injustice which is the stock-in-trade of all Governments—as of most individuals—who enjoy too much power too easily. He is profoundly patriotic, as political critics almost always are, for no one who does not care profoundly for his country will risk his own peace and happiness in trying to improve it. He has a mystical belief in his country's destiny, using such phrases as 'Ghana, the capital of all African states," and "Accra, the capital of Africa."

He has a notable devotion to England, with which he feels himself personally united, through its literature, through its great men, through his sense of a connection with what is royal and what is aristocratic. "I shall always recognise Britain as my most ancient superintendent of justice, equitable in mammoth tranquility of righteousness and peace."

How far his 'scientific' passages are intended seriously, it is not easy to assess. Their recurring themes—the manufacture of ink, of chalk from lime, the use of "Calcium Magnesium" as a fertilizer—derive from experiences in his own life. He sold chemical fertilizers—or attempted to sell them for a time—to the farmers of Ghana, and attributed his failure to the fact that, since few of them could read, they could not understand the leaflets of instruction. In Nigeria some part of his work in schools seems to have dealt with the sale or manufacture of ink.

Lime and ink seem also at times to represent the white and black man, and lime has obvious significance as a cleanser. A passage on municipal corruption in the pamphlet *The Vision of Kushara* is followed by detailed instructions for making white cleaner out of lime.

The author has a King Charles's Head about university degrees; it is not so much that he feels entitled to ones he has not got, as that he considers himself deprived of ones he actually has or had. "O Heaven, it is a sickness for me to mix with goats who have no sense but they are dressed with my University Caps and Gowns."

He has also a private puzzle about semantics, as to which came first—the ink, or the name by which it is called? What is the relation between the word "medicine" and the means of curing sickness?

A habit which is certain to give offence is the author's apparent identification of himself with Jesus (he speaks of Jesus-Codjoe), with Jupiter, with Solomon or Mahomet. But he has given a key to his meaning in a passage in *The Queen's Visit to Ghana.* Here he writes: "It is my soul in me that is called the Lord Jesus for the flesh dies and it is the dust of the ground, I am now procreated in the spirit of immortality. . ."

Or again, in *The Astral Mouthpiece of Ghana:* "When I say I made a prayer to Jupiter, I say I spoke to my soul which owes its source in my brain or mind, God rules every man's spirit in his head."

In other words, I, Codjoe, have the spirit of Jesus in me, and am to that extent immortal and identified with Him.

My own impression of Codjoe, from a study of a few of his works and from meeting him, is that he is an author of real, if

largely unharnessed, talent. It is not easy to question him about incidents in his own life, for he is apt to answer metaphorically, or to reply to some question other than the one asked. However, his answers on points of fact seem remarkably accurate wherever it is possible to check them.

Codjoe lives along the border-edge of sanity, with at times both the extra clarity of vision and the confusion which come from beyond the barrier. Reading him is like running across a river on the tops of scattered stones; it is essential to keep going. Nothing is easier than to take a Codjoe piece phrase by phrase and make nonsense of it; but this is the nonsense made by the critic, not the author.

His acute political attack is not, I think, the mainspring of his work, which is religious. He attacks what he feels to be wrong in the eye of eternity; he is not a politically-motivated being seeking employment for his verbal cutlass.

The essence of Thomas Codjoe is in this prayer, emerging as if casually from a political discourse:

> One brother is a liar and a thief, one brother is bold, careless and extraly dishonest in word, but the last brother is God teach me what to say and die in thine very crucifying spirit, say good that I shall not only be fearless, humble and true like thine holy and snowy whiteness in thine courts above but let me leave behind me a good world fit for christians to stay, let me be thee for ever in love. I crave no earthly pleasures and riches but I need thine air to be present with me in all my ways; Lord let boldness and truth be with me for ever. . . .

"REPORT ME AND MY CAUSE ARIGHT . . ."

OLIVE HENNEBERGER

A MOST provocative and arresting analysis of the character of Hamlet is offered by Rebecca West in *The Court and the Castle* (1957), a group of essays based on her Terry Foundation lectures at Yale University. It is the purpose of this paper to set forth briefly Miss West's views and to re-examine Hamlet's character in the light of certain important points which suggest a different interpretation from hers.

For more than three hundred years now, the enigmatic spirit of Hamlet has hovered over scholars, directors, actors, critics, and audiences with more or less heavenly wings, which Miss West considers not heavenly at all. Another look at the text of the play, she avers, reveals that Hamlet, far from belonging to what has been termed the goodly fellowship of ambivalent neurotics who are pure in heart, is really an exceptionally callous, cruel, and coarse murderer, a true Machiavellian, who unhesitatingly employs violence in order to achieve his purposes. Some of Miss West's reasons for her conclusions include Hamlet's murder of three men (Polonius, Laertes, Claudius), his grisly flippancies about lugging the guts of Polonius into the neighbouring room, and his gratuitously coarse jest about the eventual putrescence of the same body, which he has made a corpse. Far from being oversensitive or constitutionally unable to take human life, Hamlet, according to Miss West, is coldly calculating, even vicious, especially when he unhesitatingly sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths in England, as he tells Horatio, without even "shriving-time allow'd."

Miss West's answer to her own question of why the world has falsely represented the character of Hamlet for more than three centuries is that the true 'revelation', which is contrary to what we wish to believe, has been too unpleasant to face. After examining the character of Hamlet in what she considers his chief roles, Renaissance man and spectator in one version of the recurrent struggle between king and usurper, she concurs in Turgenev's statement that "there is not one of us but recognizes in the prince . . . our own characteristics." The characteristics of Hamlet with which

Miss West believes we identify ourselves, however, are not the conventionally cited ones of greatness of soul or irresolution, but rather the taint and corruption of original sin, with which we have all been branded since our first parents lost Paradise. It is impossible, she points out, for either Hamlet or the human race to be without taint.

In larger perspective, Miss West sees the King and the Court in Denmark as symbolic of all government and all men. No one is spotless. Ophelia, usually played in the theatre as "a correct and timid virgin of exquisite sensibilities," Miss West sees as "a disreputable young woman," who is an altogether too-willing party to her father's scheme to acquire a royal son-in-law; even the ghost of Hamlet's father, representing to Miss West the traditional past, she also finds corrupt for the reason that man's past is no more free from error than his present.

The weaknesses of Miss West's position seem to fall roughly into two categories:

1 oversimplification of the nature of the conflict in the play as between the Christian orthodox view of man as essentially sinful, and the more hopeful humanistic view of man as essentially perfectible;

2 presentation of conclusions that are not only in direct contradiction to certain basic traits of Hamlet's character, as presented by Shakespeare, but which also vitiate some of the basic artistic principles of great tragedy.

Miss West sees *Hamlet* as a conflict between the concept, on the one hand, of free will so corrupted and weakened by the sin of Adam that fallen man is incapable, without the initiative of divine grace, of performing acts leading to salvation; and on the other hand, the philosophy of traditional humanism that increases man's responsibility by asserting that he is able, by the use of his will and intellect, to choose good instead of evil. This latter view, Miss West points out, had its origin in the fifth-century Western heresy Pelagianism, which "had been revived by the Renaissance" and steadily gained adherents "until it triumphed in the nineteenth century." Miss West finds that all Shakespeare's work "gives impressive testimony . . . against Pelagianism" and thus constitutes "an array of evidence against the theory that man is free equally to choose between good and evil, and that, should he

choose good, his own natural ability will enable him to reach moral perfection." Hamlet's frequently cited accomplishments as a Renaissance prince, set forth in Ophelia's soldier-courtier-scholar speech, Miss West asserts, do "not aid his moral power." She further states that Shakespeare ascribes to Hamlet only one virtuous action, the political action of designating Fortinbras as his successor, thus indicating princely concern for the safety of his subjects. Otherwise, Miss West concludes, "it is quite certain that [Shakespeare] wished to present Hamlet as a bad man."

In order to obtain a clear and adequate perspective of the essentially sixteenth-century struggle, reflected not only in *Hamlet* but in all Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, it would be necessary to consider the Elizabethan questioning of the long-established and interrelated cosmological, natural, political, and religious orders, and the effect of this questioning on the world, the state, and the individual. To attempt to do so in detail or to re-examine the vexed problems of Hamlet's character and of his delay would require several volumes. In the light of Miss West's ably and cogently stated thesis, however, perhaps a restatement and rethinking of a few points, at least tangential to her argument, are in order.

First of all, Miss West does not seem to consider the possibility of reconciling the doctrines of man's essential sinfulness and man's potential perfectibility by reference to the doctrines of Christ's becoming man in order to take away the sins of the world, and of a religious man's achieving salvation by means of divine grace, either according to the Augustinian view that he is elect who perseveres, or to the Calvinistic view that he who is elect will persevere. And whether we agree or disagree with Goethe that Hamlet is a frail instrument, or with Coleridge that Hamlet thinks too much, or with any other of the countless interpretations of his character, it seems abundantly clear that Shakespeare regarded him as a religious man who constantly seeks truth and divine grace in a world that is essentially Christian and predominantly Catholic. There is reference to the observance of the season "wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated," and there are many observations about the necessity of receiving the sacraments, with particular emphasis on confession and extreme unction, and the full rites of Christian burial, as well as unmistakable allusions to purgatory and hell.

Against this background Hamlet stands out not only as the most intelligent person in Elsinore, as Miss West observes, but also as the one who is most sensitive to the edicts of ecclesiastical law and the demands of a religious conscience. Hamlet alone of all the court objects to the marriage of his mother with her deceased husband's brother as within the forbidden degree of kindred considered incestuous by the Church. (Some sixty years before the birth of Shakespeare, eight Catholic universities had ruled against the proposed marriage of Henry VIII with Catherine of Aragon because she was the widow of his brother, Prince Arthur.) Hamlet, moreover, cites as one of the most diabolic aspects of his father's murder the fact that he was sent to his death "unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd"; and he invokes as his stated reason for not killing Claudius at prayer the conventional, theological view that the state of the soul in eternity depends on its spiritual condition at the time of death.

For such a man, and for Shakespeare himself, the problem of determining whether the ghost was the spirit of a Catholic king straight from purgatory, or of a Protestant devil straight from hell, was a very real one. Shakespeare's audiences too would understand that Hamlet's dilemma and consequent delay, far from being mere dramatic devices necessitated by the nature of the revenge play, were indeed to be taken very seriously, especially in view of the turbulent years of political and religious struggle through which England had passed so recently that many Elizabethan families were Catholic upstairs and Protestant downstairs. On seeing his father's ghost, Hamlet's first words, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" are a prayer for protection against evil spirits, and for deliverance from the evil consequences supposedly attendant on conversing with a "goblin damn'd." Later Hamlet devises the play within a play in order to determine Claudius's guilt, lest the devil, with his power to assume a pleasing shape, incite him to kill an innocent man in order to increase the population of hell. And again when the ghost appears in Gertrude's chamber, Hamlet at once implores heavenly guards to hover over him with their wings. Why then does Miss West insist that Hamlet never achieves any of the divine grace which he so earnestly invokes? At the conclusion of *The Tempest* Shakespeare seems to bid us rejoice in the possibility of spiritual development in even the abhorred Caliban, when, at what George Lyman Kittredge calls "the dawn of morality in his

soul" (*Shakspere*, 1926, p. 18), the monster says, "I'll be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace." Does it seem reasonable then that Shakespeare would consign Hamlet to total spiritual failure?

Miss West defends her convictions regarding Hamlet's spiritual defeat chiefly on the grounds of his slaying of Polonius, Laertes and Claudius with his own hand; on his seemingly complete lack of compunction for his error in mistaking Polonius for the King; and for his ordering the instant execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern without a qualm of conscience. To treat the second of these charges first, Hamlet says over the dead Polonius, "For this same lord, / I do repent," and it seems we should take him at his word. If some of his language is inappropriately flippant on this occasion, so it is in the cellarage scene when he addresses his father's ghost as "boy," "true penny" and "old mole." It would seem, therefore, that Hamlet is prompted to flippancy and impertinence by excitement rather than by insensibility. It also seems appropriate to point out once more that these deaths are in a sense the unfortunate by-products of the injunctions laid on Hamlet by the ghost. Polonius, as at least one waggish scholar has observed, dies chiefly of being Polonius; the dying Laertes proclaims his own treachery; and the immediate causes of even Claudius's death are the envenomed foil and the poisoned cup. Moreover, all these deaths in turn, constituting a choice between Hamlet's life and the lives of his adversaries, virtually involve self-defence, in which Hamlet's failure to use his sword would have been *se offendendo* indeed, in a way never imagined by the clown!

As for Hamlet's seemingly vicious eagerness to send the souls of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to perdition by ordering the English king to deny them shriving time, is it absolutely certain that such words appeared in his execution order, or does he employ them merely to make graphic to Horatio the urgent tone of his communication? Shriving time had been much in Hamlet's thoughts because his father had failed to receive it, and because he himself had given it as his reason for not killing Claudius at prayer; the expression would therefore come easily to his tongue. Moreover, only twenty-five lines earlier, Hamlet tells Horatio that in the original writ of execution, Claudius had ordered the English king to have his (Hamlet's) head struck off, "on the supervise, no leisure bated, / No, not to stay the grinding of the axe." Could

these words too be more satisfactorily interpreted as a manner of speaking rather than a direct quotation from the text of the royal mandate?

It is not Hamlet's bloodthirsty nature that involves him in these deaths and those of other characters, but rather the circumstances accompanying his ever-deepening sense of responsibility and his ever-widening search for truth. And most disturbing for this writer at least is not the murders that Hamlet orders and commits, but rather his role in the death of Ophelia, although Ophelia "fell in the weeping brook."

Perhaps it is not too much of a digression at this point to consider Miss West's pronouncements on Ophelia and her feeling for Hamlet. Poor Ophelia, according to Miss West, one of that "army of not virgin martyrs" who were pawns to family ambition, is Hamlet's forsaken mistress, who has lost her integrity and her chastity. Miss West finds support for these conclusions chiefly in Ophelia's "tolerance of Hamlet's obscene conversations." It is Ophelia herself, however, who provides the key to her attitude towards Hamlet, during their conversation when Claudius and Polonius are behind the arras. When she says, "O, help him, you sweet heavens;" "O heavenly powers, restore him;" and "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown," she clearly thinks him insane. If Hamlet were not departing as far as possible from his normal behaviour in his attempt to feign insanity, he would not address a young woman as he does Ophelia, any more than he would have rudely mocked Polonius, as he surely does in the preceding scene, when the old man announces the arrival of the players.

Ophelia understands, as psychiatrists now tell us, that such outspokenness is common among those whose reticence has been set aside by insanity, and she has only sympathy for Hamlet's misfortune. Surely the only additional evidence that Ophelia is other than a girl so over-protected and father-dominated as to fail Hamlet when he needs her most, is provided by her St Valentine's Day song, after she herself is in reality "divided from . . . her fair judgment." Theodore Spencer states that the words she sings in delirium would have caused Ophelia to blush "in her maidenly sanity." (*Shakespeare and the Nature of Man,* 1942, p. 105.) Kittredge in his edition of *Hamlet* (1939, p. 258) follows the suggestion of Strachey that Ophelia was singing a song that she had heard in childhood from her nurse, who "may well have been as

free-spoken as Juliet's." In any event there is nothing in the song that could not have been known by an Elizabethan *jeune fille bien élevée,* since the Elizabethans, although not hag-ridden by sex as is our world of filmland, were much more frank about it than we are to-day. Miss West objects that Ophelia's contemplation "without surprise or distaste" of Hamlet's obscenity "cannot be explained as consistent with the custom of the time." "If that were the reason for it," she adds, "all the men and women in Shakespeare's plays, Romeo and Juliet, Beatrice and Benedict, Miranda and Ferdinand, Antony and Cleopatra, would have talked obscenely together, which is not the case." But here again Miss West fails to take cognizance of the insanity, feigned and real, that sets apart the mixed-company conversations in the play under consideration.

Miss West's subsequent statement that "no line in the play suggests" that Ophelia "felt either passion or affection" for Hamlet seems to indicate rejection of an interesting idea offered by Oscar James Campbell that it was neither Hamlet's apparent loss of reason nor the murder of her father that proved Ophelia's undoing. "It was her love, thwarted on the verge of fruition, that drove her insane. The flower that she was trying to pluck when she fell into the stream betrayed her tragic obsession with sex, for it was the *orchis mascula,* a popular phallic symbol" (*The Living Shakespeare,* 1949, p. 77). At least this explanation may possibly provide a more acceptable *raison d'être* for Gertrude's poetic, if undramatic, speech about the long purples, than Miss West's description of it as an "ill-timed," "botanical digression." And Campbell's interpretation has the added merit of coinciding perfectly with Miss West's passionate denial that Ophelia's death is suicide, a problem which seems to disturb her as much as it does the gravedigger.

Miss West's conclusion is that Hamlet, like everyone else, because of the taint of original sin, is in a hopeless plight from which he will never be able to free himself, no matter how many deeds of violence he may commit;[1] and she finds the extreme pessimism of the tragedy not only anti-Pelagian but "Calvinist in its allegation of total depravity," with "echoes of Calvin's voice" throughout.

[1] Miss West also detects and traces reflections of this point of view as a recurrent theme in the works of the English novelists, as well as Marcel Proust and Franz Kafka.

It is of course the Catholic Church and the Church of England that figure most prominently in Shakespeare's religious heritage. Mary Arden's family were Catholic gentlefolk; and during Shakespeare's boyhood one of the headmasters at the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School was Simon Hunt, who left in 1575 to become a Jesuit. The national Church of England, a peculiarly English compromise-religion of the middle way, owed allegiance neither to Rome nor Geneva, and was at least outwardly accepted by most good Elizabethans. William Shakespeare was baptized and married according to its laws; he acted as godfather and bought tithes in Stratford's parish church, Holy Trinity; and, together with other members of his family, he is buried inside its chancel rail. Even if, as Marchette Chute suggests in her *Shakespeare of London* (1949, p. 53), Anne Hathaway were reared according to the tenets of one of the various Puritan sects, direct Calvinistic influence on Shakespeare remains conjectural. The tragedy of *Macbeth* might have offered a fruitful theme for the expounding of the Calvinistic doctrine, but the writer finds no evidence in the text of the play to indicate that Shakespeare considers Macbeth's responsibility for murder in terms of the inevitable results of the general corruption of the will of mankind.

Further analysis of Hamlet's character seems to reveal that Shakespeare portrays him not only as a religious man, but above all as a seeker of truth, a reasonable man, a fact of especial significance in the light of Coleridge's assertion that deep reason is possible only to men of deep feeling, and that all truth is a kind of revelation. Hamlet, like all other men, carries on his quest for truth first in terms of self-knowledge and then in terms of knowledge of the world about him. Miss West recognizes Hamlet as a seeker of wisdom and concedes that self-awareness is power, but in the end she again acquiesces in Turgenev's opinion that Hamlet is, "beyond all things else, analysis and egoism," a character who "lives only to himself." Miss West adds that Hamlet is constitutionally unable to serve the interests of another person, and that he abstractedly disobeys the ghost's commands because he "can kill only on his own behalf."

As had been pointed out earlier, Hamlet's initial quest for truth is relatively limited. He is cabin'd, cribb'd and confin'd in Denmark, surrounded by people who are sure of everything, people who know what they want and get it. Hamlet alone is not sure.

Polonius, for example, is willing to wager his head on his own unfailing ability to find "where truth is hid." Small wonder that in such a world Hamlet cannot avoid the precipitation of calamities, and is unable to perform his assigned task highly and holily, without any illness attending it.

At the beginning of the play, Hamlet must determine whether the ghost is an honest ghost. As the play proceeds, the truth Hamlet seeks and the answers he finds change, because Hamlet, like Shakespeare's other greatest tragic heroes, is not a static but a dynamic character, and the answers we get to questions depend largely on what we ourselves are. Just as some fourteen years after the death of his son Hamnet, Shakespeare wrote *The Winter's Tale,* in which the sublimated grief of Leontes at the death of Mamillius seems to express the timeless, universal sorrow of all fathers over the loss of their sons, so Hamlet becomes aware that his problem is not just to solve his own dilemma by showing his mother the error of her ways or bringing Claudius to justice, because his dilemma is in a sense everyone's dilemma, the dilemma of Denmark, the dilemma of the world. Spencer contends that Hamlet's major soliloquies indicate his progressive ability to transform the personal into the universal (op. cit., p. 106). The writer finds additional evidence of this ability in Hamlet's behaviour, and in his belief, expressed towards the end of the play, in "a divinity that shapes our ends," not a soulless machine, but rather a Christian Providence dispensing justice. Hamlet's problem was to resolve the doubts and questioning of an age and for all time: the conflict was between the Old Testament and the New; between the medieval revenge ethic and the relative modernity of the Elizabethan Age; between Ptolemy and Copernicus; between Cicero and Machiavelli; between Catholicism and Protestantism; and more basically in the relation between king and usurper, king and subject, servant and master, man and woman, parent and child.

It is perhaps a self-evident truth that Shakespeare is a dramatist and not a theologian, and that *Hamlet* is a play and not a study in theology. Miss West's interpretation of the title role vitiates one of the sturdiest traditions in Shakespeare's legacy of native English drama, the morality play, in which the answer to the question "What shall I do to be saved?" is consistently focused on man's ability to choose a virtuous life and to seek God through the sacraments. At the conclusion of perhaps the best-known morality play *Every-*

man, the central figure of the play, although fallen from baptismal grace, has sought and received regenerating grace. The audience is assured in the Epilogue: "And he that hath his accounte hole and sounde, / Hye in heuen he shall be crounde." At the end of *Dr Faustus,* which is also essentially a morality play, the caveat of the Chorus concerning the "hellish fall" of the hero would surely lose much of its forcefulness as a tragic theme, if Dr Faustus's initial willingness to renounce God in exchange for intellectual power, and his subsequent refusal to welsh on his bargain with Mephistopheles were interpreted as the inescapable consequences of original sin. Miss West, like the ancient Greeks, apparently does not barter with intentions, but if Hamlet, the religious man and the seeker of truth, be lost then Everyman is lost indeed.

Of the several other recurrent themes of great tragedy which Miss West's theory negates, only one will be discussed, that of expiation and purification through suffering. Sacrifice, one of the fundamentals of Christianity, is also one of the important themes of great tragedy. In God the bloodless sacrifice of eternal self-giving in heaven is translated into history on Calvary, and into art in the great tragedies. Much virtue has been produced historically and artistically by torture and suffering. Tragic heroes are subjected to baiting similar to that that went on in the bear gardens, and the way in which Shakespeare implies suffering is one of his greatest arts. Suffering is used as a means of uniting and as a means of revealing character; and capacity for suffering is invariably associated with excellence, spiritual power, and loftiness.

Fratricide and regicide before the opening of *Hamlet* have brought about disorder and chaos, macrocosmically reflected in the universe and microcosmically reflected in the minds of the characters. Order can be restored only through a period of suffering, during which Hamlet asks nothing for himself except to have Horatio as his friend and to have his cause reported aright, but he gives and hazards all he has. Far from being the lustful, self-seeking murderer whom Miss West sees in her mind's eye, Shakespeare's Hamlet seems to be characterized by that kind of incandescent virtue which is best versed in the art of total self-giving. The end crowns all when purification comes to Denmark as a promise that its future will be more glorious than its

past, and to Hamlet, who "dies on the search for truth that all men die on,"[2] and finds at last in death the meaning of life.

Instead of doubling as pessimistic personifications of Calvinistic doctrine, Hamlet and others of Shakespeare's tragic heroes might seem more appropriately cast as the prototypes of Browning's characters who achieve triumph in failure. Much has been written concerning the "poetic justice" of the end of *King Lear*. If, as has been frequently pointed out, Queen Cordelia of France is triumphant in death because she returns to Britain, not to restore Lear to the throne but to restore herself to his heart, so it would seem, despite Hamlet's indisputable failure to prevent further bloodshed, to preserve his own equanimity of spirit, to marry Ophelia, whom he says he loved, to rule as king of Denmark, even to preserve his own life, that Shakespeare intends for him to be sung to a well-deserved and victorious rest by those flights of angels.

"The rest is silence."

[2] Willard Farnham ed., *Hamlet* (Penguin Books, 1957), p. 24.

CONSONANCE AND CONSEQUENCE

FRED MAYNE

WHEN Middleton Murry called Samuel Butler and Bernard Shaw "two modern and closely allied masters of plain prose"[1] he was decrying the purple patch and attacking the heresy that fine prose is poetic prose. Nevertheless, the expression "plain prose," if applied to Shaw, is misleading or at best inadequate. Shaw did not write plain prose; he was a rhetorician in the original uncorrupted Isocratic and Aristotelian sense. He was, as Eric Bentley called him, "a poet of polemics."[2] He wrote to convert other people to his own opinions.

It was rhetoric that raised his non-dramatic writings far above the level of ordinary polemics and transformed chastening comedy into proselytizing satire. And it was this missionary zeal which prevented his rhetoric from lapsing into an artificial elegance, into the intellectual sterility with which its practice is so often associated. To say that he used rhetorical devices is merely to say that he was an artist or "a poet of polemics" and not an expositor. To say that most of his rhetorical devices may be loosely classified under the heading of 'wit,' is to say that he was concerned, among other things, with intellectual conversion. For Shaw, meaning, not form, was important; and although Sir Herbert Read's distinction between "Elegance," as being concerned with the position of words, and "Wit" as being concerned with the meanings of words,[3] is invalid in so far as wit, too, has a secondary interest in the position and "interanimation" of words, it is valid in so far as wit is primarily intellectual in intention, if not in motivation.

Now it is not suggested that wit, any less than any other form of rhetoric, cannot lead to a predominance of virtuosity over substance. It did with Oscar Wilde. At times it did with Shaw. But for Wilde wit was a means of withdrawal, whereas for Shaw it was a means of attack and more. It was a method of perception, as well as illumination. Particularly on the rhetorical level, his thought shaped his wit far more than his wit shaped his thought. He was a witty writer and not a writer of witticisms.

[1] J. Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (London, 1922), p. 67.
[2] E. R. Bentley, *The Modern Theatre* (London, 1948), p. 98.
[3] Herbert Read, *English Prose Style* (London, 1928), p 187.

It was this almost complete fusion of wit and thought, with its consequent subordination of rhetorical figures, that ensured the integrity of Shaw's style and prompted Middleton Murry's "plain prose" dictum. "Dinna push, laddie, dinna push" is the soundest advice that can be given to any embryo or senescent humorist; and Shaw in his protracted heyday is the supreme exemplar. It is this simulation of the unpremeditated which distinguishes modern wit from that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with its self-conscious play on words and pompous press of figures. Applying to wit what Edmund Wilson calls the "old cliché" about the "inevitableness and surprise" of good prose, it can be said that, amongst the Metaphysicals, the emphasis was on the manufactured surprise to such a laboured extent that it ceased to be surprising. To-day the element of surprise must be more closely allied to an appearance of the inevitable. Sustained from below by a power, sincerity, and pertinacity of thought, Shaw's prose presents a surface which combines the pleasures of the expected with the stimulus of the unexpected.

In this article I shall be concerned with the inevitable, the less obvious component of wit.

On a rhetorical level the appearance of the inevitable will be achieved by an apparent ease of execution and speed of delivery. That Shaw's "plain prose" was an excellent medium for polemics has already been remarked. With Quintilian he did not believe that incomprehensibility was a sign of genius. Says Chesterton:

> The plain pugnacious style of Shaw has greatly clarified all controversies. He has slain the polysyllable . . . He does not think that difficult questions will be made simpler by using difficult words about them.[4]

In the twentieth century the slaying of the polysyllable is also a stylistic step in the achievement of a witty effect. The days of Dickens's unusual gymnastic and ablutionary performances, or Sterne's hiatus into which dropped the hot chestnut, are gone. We now think it funnier to be drunk than in an inebriated condition, and funnier to be dead than to have crossed the Great Divide. If we were also certain that it is funnier to be polysyllabic than 'sesquipedalian,' we might be tempted to represent a fashion as an immutable principle. But 'sesquipedalian' still

[4] G. K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw* (London, 1909), p. 105.

has the virtue of the outlandish, and changes in style and wit are in great part mere changes in fashion, the outcome of the search for new, and therefore more potent, aesthetic stimuli. The terminological inexactitudes and exactitudes of polysyllabic humour represent a worn-out and obsolescent phase, and it is enough that we claim for Shaw's simplicity of diction that it is a wonderful instrument, not for wit, but for modern wit:

> CRAVEN (*his sense of injury growing on him*) Am I to understand, Paramore, that you took it on yourself to pass sentence of death on me: yes, of Death! on the strength of three dogs and an infernal monkey?
>
> PARAMORE (*utterly contemptuous of Craven's narrow personal view of the matter*) Yes. That's all I could get a licence for.
>
> *The Philanderer,* Act II.

> SAVOYARD. Well, Vaughan has no sense of humour; and if you joke with him he'll think you're insulting him on purpose. Mind: it's not that he doesn't see a joke: he does; and it hurts him. A comedy scene makes him sore all over: he goes away black and blue and pitches into the play for all he's worth.
>
> *Fanny's First Play,* Induction.

All this is indeed a far cry from the pompous prose of even the dialogue of the Shaw novels. But then the novels were humourless, and with Shaw the change in his style, already very evident in his dramatic and musical criticism, marks his evolution—almost revolution—into a wit.

Still in the restricted field of diction, the devices of alliteration and assonance next claim attention, for both serve a similar purpose. Indeed, alliteration is but a specialized form of assonance; and both, by promoting speed of delivery and ease of apprehension, add to the feeling of the inevitable. Both, too, are inherently comic, embracing as they do the humour of Bergsonian automatism, and also its opposite pole, the sense of liberation—in this case from the trammels of language. Rhyme is a form of assonance, and comic verse, with its over-emphatic, often far-fetched, rhyme and its pointed alliteration, as practised by Lewis Carrol, Edward Lear and W. S. Gilbert—"I am the very model of a modern major-general"—provides the most obvious literary

field for its exploitation. Humorous literature, too, abounds in such names as Burglar Bill, Baby Bella, Ben Bluff, Willie Waugh, and Andrew Aguecheek. Is it not possible that the name of Charlie Chaplin, by some queer psychic alchemy, helped in some small degree to shape a career?

Alliteration and assonance are much more effective when the similarity of sound falls on the stressed syllables, and there seems little doubt that Shaw cast his sentences in this form in order to secure the maximum effect. That he used it as a conscious artifice is borne out by its abundance in the talk of his witty characters, and its neglect in the antiphonies of their foils.

Quotations of Tanner's contributions to his dialogue with the simple-minded Octavius and with the pompous Roebuck Ramsden, who as a comic, but unwitty, character is only alliterative in name, are adduced in evidence. That they are nearly all to be found within the compass of a few pages shows how frequently the device is used:

> TANNER . . . and like a fool I began arguing with him about the folly of leaving a young woman under the control of an old man with obsolete ideas.
>
> *Man and Superman,* Act I.

> TANNER . . . She'll commit every crime a respectable woman can; and she'll justify every one of them by saying that it was the wish of her guardians. She'll put everything on us; and we shall have no more control over her than a couple of mice over a cat.
>
> ibid., Act I.

> TANNER. Remember that the next time you meet a grizzly bear or a Bengal tiger, Tavy.
>
> ibid., Act I.

Here it appears that Shaw could not resist putting in the bathetically alliterative "Tavy" after the "tiger."

> TANNER . . . To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it.
>
> ibid., Act. I.

In the last quotation alliteration is used to stress the key words "study," "strip," and "surprise." Such emphasis, which heightens both the contrast and similitude inherent in wit, is widely used by Shaw:

> RICHARD . . . So I hear you are married, Pastor, and that your wife has a most ungodly allowance of good looks.
>
> *The Devil's Disciple,* Act I.

Often the witty effect produced by repetition is not gained by the repetition of the same sound, but by epizeuxis — the repetition of the same word:

> TANNER. Why, man, your head is in the lioness's mouth: you are half swallowed already — in three bites — Bite One, Ricky: Bite Two, Ticky; Bite Three, Tavy; and down you go.
>
> *Man and Superman,* Act I.

> TANNER *(seriously)* I know it, Ramsden. Yet even I cannot wholly conquer shame. We live in an atmosphere of shame. We are ashamed of everything that is real about us; ashamed of ourselves, of our relatives, of our incomes, of our accents, of our opinions, of our experience, just as we are ashamed of our naked skins. Good Lord, my dear Ramsden, we are ashamed to walk, ashamed to ride in an omnibus, ashamed to hire a hansom instead of keeping a carriage, ashamed of keeping one horse instead of two and a groom-gardener instead of a coachman and footman. The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is. Why, you're ashamed to buy my book, ashamed to read it: the only thing you're not ashamed of is to judge me for it without having read it; and even that only means that you're ashamed to have heterodox opinions. Look at the effect I produce because my fairy godmother withheld from me this gift of shame.
>
> ibid., Act I.

When the alliteration or assonance would otherwise be too obvious to be a legitimate rhetorical aid, Shaw injects fresh humour by guying it, or by making it particularly appropriate to the character or the moment:

> ANN. Don't be foolish, Jack. Mr. Ramsden has always

been Grandpapa Roebuck to me. I am Granny's Annie; and he is Annie's Granny. I christened him so when I first learnt to speak.

ibid., Act I.

This, spoken in a very gentle voice, emphasizes both the duplicity of Ann's pose of childlike and maidenly dependence and the fatuity of the fat-witted Roebuck Ramsden:

MENDOZA. O wert thou, Louisa,
The wife of Mendoza,
Mendoza's Louisa, Louisa Mendoza,
How blest were the life of Louisa's Mendoza!
How painless his longing of love for Louisa!
That is real poetry — from the heart — from the heart of hearts. Don't you think it will move her?

ibid., Act III.

Shaw, of course, enjoyed such tomfoolery for its own sake; but the unreal episode of the brigands in the untwentieth-century atmosphere of the Sierra Nevada provides an excellent transition to the Hell Scene. Mendoza is the farcical prototype of the Devil, the master of unreality; and his romantic twaddle, which culminates in this doggerel, is the backdrop against which the scene is played:

SIR DEXTER. You come in the nick of time. Sir Jafna here has just been qualifying you as a bloodsucker, a pirate, a parasite, a robber baron and finally as vermin. Vermin! How do you like it?

THE DUKE (*calmly taking the end chair nearest the window, on Basham's left*) I wonder why the epithet robber is applied only to barons. You never hear of robber dukes; yet my people have done plenty of robbery in their time. (*With a sigh of regret*) Ah, that's all over now. The robbers have become the robbed.

On the Rocks, Act II.

The rhetorical emotionalism of Sir Jafna's romanticism and the urbane detachment of the Duke's realism are both underlined in this almost inconsequential, yet selective, reference to the "robber baron."

A last example, in which Mrs Pearce is asking Higgins not to

use "a certain word" which "begins with the same letter as bath" in front of Eliza:

> MRS PEARCE. Only this morning, sir, you applied it to your boots, to the butter, and to the brown bread.
>
> HIGGINS. Oh, that! Mere alliteration, Mrs Pearce, natural to the poet.
>
> *Pygmalion,* Act II.

And natural to a master of rhetoric. It sharpens the barb of his wit, and by assisting in the onrush of his prose heightens the feeling of the inevitable. Seldom, except by invitation, does it fall to the level of "apt alliteration's artful aid," as it does with Tanner's "Down with Government by the Greyhaired."[5] Few writers are less likely than Shaw to trip up their readers by leaving their scaffolding lying around.

But the spanking pace of Shaw's prose is of course mainly achieved by assiduous attention to rhythm. Now, not all humorous writing requires a rapid tempo. Deprecatory humour, and the humour which depends on a simulated ingenuousness and earnestness, may require a more halting rhythm, varied perhaps by little ridiculous rushes of confidence. The humour, too, which partakes of the pathetic must obviously suit the tempo to the mood. As befits its more outgoing nature, however, wit does require a comparatively unimpeded flow. Polemical wit, in particular, must be delivered at great speed in order to preserve an appearance of confident objectivity and to promote that suspension of judgment so important to its success. The voluble and vivacious patter of Sullivan's music is the musical counterpart to, and the setting for, the frivolity of Gilbert; and Shaw not only provides a musical counterpart to his own wit, but also makes the most of the humour of the inevitable that is inherent in regular rhythm. It is with good reason that serious poetry with the too regular beat so suitable for comic verse easily slips into bathos and lends itself so well to parody.

"Do not suppose for one moment," said Shaw, "that I learnt my art from English men of letters. True, they showed me how to handle English words; but if I had known no more than that, my works would never have crossed the Channel. My masters were the masters of a universal language; they were, to go from summit

[5] *Man and Superman,* Act I.

to summit, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner."[6] It is significant that the final "summit" is Wagner, whom Shaw described as "the literary musician par excellence,"[7] because his subject matter was so closely allied to his tone structures. For Shaw knew all about the dangers of rhythmical prose:

> HIGGINS. Pickering: this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric. Observe the rhythm of his native wood-notes wild. "I'm willing to tell you: I'm wanting to tell you: I'm waiting to tell you." Sentimental rhetoric! that's the Welsh strain in him. It also accounts for his mendacity and dishonesty.
>
> *Pygmalion,* Act II.

Especially dangerous was it to one who aimed at intellectual, rather than emotional, conversion. Rhythm exerts an hypnotic spell, evoking responses almost at a biological level. Nevertheless, as with alliteration and assonance, it is used far more freely in the speeches of his witty realists who give the Shavian viewpoint, for self-expression naturally took the form of wit. Tanner's speeches are more witty and more rhythmical than Ramsden's or Octavius's, Don Juan's than the Statue's, Undershaft's than Stephen's, Magnus's than Boanerges's, and those of the realistic realist, Larry Doyle, than those of the romantic realist, Tom Broadbent.

But all this is merely to say that Shaw was not primarily a polemical writer who addressed himself solely to the intellect. He was also not only an artist, but a dramatic artist to boot; and, as he himself said, rhetoric is one of the oldest tools of the dramatist. As a dramatist, his appeal is to audiences who are intellectually diverse, but emotionally similar; and despite his declared intention of presenting his case on a purely intellectual level, he wins emotional support for Undershaft by making Stephen a prig, for Magnus by making Boanerges a loud-mouthed demagogue, for Tanner by making Ramsden a stuffed-shirt and Octavius a simpleton, for Richard Dudgeon by making Mrs Dudgeon a disgusting bigot, and for Bluntschli by making Sergius a theatrical ass. None of these foils would or could be witty, and consequently seldom use the rhythmic rhetoric which is so often the vehicle for Shaw's satirical powers of persuasion:

[6] Quoted by Edmund Wilson in *The Triple Thinkers,* rev. ed. (London, 1952), p. 173.
[7] Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays* (London, 1932), p. 266.

STEPHEN (*rising and looking at him steadily*) I know the difference between right and wrong.

UNDERSHAFT (*hugely tickled*) You don't say so! What! no capacity for business, no knowledge of law, no sympathy with art, no pretension to philosophy; only a simple knowledge of the secret that has puzzled all the philosophers, baffled all the lawyers, muddled all the men of business, and ruined most of the artists: the secret of right and wrong. Why, man, you're a genius, a master of masters, a god! At twenty-four, too!

. . .

STEPHEN (*springing up again*) I am sorry, sir, that you force me to forget the respect due to you as my father. I am an Englishman; and I will not hear the Government of my country insulted. (*He thrusts his hands in his pockets and walks angrily across to the window.*)

Major Barbara, Act III.

Not only does the style of speech suit the speaker, but it also varies widely in the same speaker. This does not mean that the characters necessarily speak out of character, but that they change under the pressure of a new situation or, as more likely in Shaw, under the pressure of a new idea or challenge. The diffident Undershaft of the first Act is not the proselytizing Undershaft of the second and third Acts. Cusins, the detached and witty bystander of the beginning of the play, finally becomes Cusins, the convert. With these changes comes a change in the rhythm of their speeches. How out of character would have been the following outburst from Cusins unconverted:

CUSINS. You cannot have power for good without having power for evil too. Even mother's milk nourishes murderers as well as heroes. This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic, religious power that can enslave men's souls. As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyers, the doctors, the priests, the literary men, the professors, the artists, and the politicians, who, once in authority, are

> more disastrous and tyrannical than all the fools, rascals, and imposters. I want a power simple enough for the common man to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good.
>
> *Major Barbara,* Act III.

The wit is still there, but it is now a wit informed by a more constructive purpose. It is the same kind of wit as that of the later Undershaft.

The more emphatic rhythm of the proselytizing realists is, of course, the vehicle for more effective assertion, for a rhetoric which, if broken into its elements, has the superficial appearance of invective, but which is raised far above the level of invective and declamation to a high satirical level, by the loftiness of the theme, by the intensity of moral feeling, and, what concerns us more at the moment, by the extraordinary skill by which the units of invective are built up into a glittering and imposing configuration. The rhythm contributes to the appearance of effortlessness and is the cement which binds the structure together. The result is what we may call an oratorical style.

Many discussions on Shaw's style recognize that it was shaped on the public platform, but forget that the stage is a public platform and that, stylistically, the distinguishing feature of written polemic is its oratorical form.

Shaw had no patience with discussions concerning the niceties and secret subtleties of literary style. He insisted that in writing the one and only thing to aim at was effectiveness of assertion . . . Shaw's most conspicuous fault was over-emphasis. It belonged to his method and was deliberately cultivated, and it is hard not to believe that the habit of it, a habit which grew, was largely born of the public platform.[8]

Frank Harris called it "harangue-writing," and estimated that during his Socialist period Shaw gave a thousand harangues in twelve years.[9]

Now such criticism is only partly legitimate, unless we expect for instance, irony in advertisement copy or wit in an obituary notice. Shaw either wrote frank polemic or he wrote for the stage

[8] S. K. Ratcliffe in *Shaw and Society,* ed. C. E. M. Joad (London, 1953) p. 64.
[9] Frank Harris, *Bernard Shaw* (London, 1931), p. 93.

and dramatic dialogue demands an immediate response from an audience. This response is conditioned by the volatility of the spoken word, and by participation as a member of a by no means homogeneous group. Of a secluded reader a much more active, and therefore imaginative, response should be sought by means of a more indirect and allusive style. A reading of Shaw may at times produce a feeling of being bludgeoned into acquiescence by a continuous and wearisome violence of assertion; but in listening to him from the auditorium this "biting over-emphasis"[10] is effective in gaining unremitting attention to the spoken word. A similar feeling of fatigue and consequent decline in attention or mindfulness may perhaps be brought on by reading through Shakespeare's flood of metaphor, particularly in the later plays; but Shakespeare's metaphor is less a poetic parallel than a corporeal substitute, and from the stage it is a marvellous means of bodying forth the spoken word. Even if Shaw, like Shakespeare, has not been careful to give his audiences a rest from his rhetorical fireworks, the sheer brilliance of the display would be almost enough to ensure sustained attention.

As it is, too, the very rhythm by which he gains vehemence is also an instrument for variety and relaxation:

> THE DEVIL . . . This marvellous force of Life of which you boast is a force of Death: Man measures his strength by his destructiveness. What is his religion? An excuse for hating me. What is his law? An excuse for hanging you. What is his morality? Gentility! an excuse for consuming without producing. What is his art? An excuse for gloating over pictures of slaughter. What are his politics? Either the worship of a despot because a despot can kill, or parliamentary cock-fighting.
>
> *Man and Superman,* Act III.

The rhetorical questions supply a progressively upward swing. The "excuse," made scornfully and satirically emphatic by repetition, marks the highest point in each sense group, after which there is a falling away. The exclamatory "Gentility" marks the highest point of the aggregation. The definitive diminuendo is heralded by the omission of the "excuse," and a derisive and expectorative "cock-fighting" applies the closure:

[10] Edmund Wilson, *Classics and Commercials* (London, 1951), p. 240.

SIR DEXTER . . . Pandranath: you are only a silly nigger pretending to be an English gentleman: you are found out. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

He goes out, leaving an atmosphere of awe behind him, in which the Indian is choking with indignation, and for the moment inarticulate.

SIR BEMROSE. This is awful. We cannot do without him.

SIR JAFNA (*finding his tongue*) I am despised. I am called nigger by this dirty-faced barbarian whose forefathers were naked savages worshipping acorns and mistletoe in the woods whilst my people were spreading the highest enlightenment yet reached by the human race from the temples of Brahma the thousandfold who is all the gods in one. This primitive savage dares to accuse me of imitating him: me, with the blood in my veins of conquerors who have swept through continents vaster than a million dog-holes like this island of yours. They founded a civilization to which your little kingdom is no better than a concentration camp. What you have of religion comes from the east; yet no Hindu, no Parsee, no Jain, would stoop to its crudities. Is there a mirror here? Look at your faces and look at the faces of my people in Ceylon, the cradle of the human race. There you see Man as he came from the hand of God, who has left on every feature the unmistakeable stamp of the great original creative artist. There you see Woman with eyes in her head that mirror the universe instead of little peepholes filled with fading pebbles. Set those features, those eyes, those burning colours beside the miserable smudged lumps of half-baked dough, the cheap commercial copies of a far-away gallery of masterpieces that you call western humanity, and tell me, if you dare, that you are the original and I the imitation. Do you not fear the lightning? the earthquake? the vengeance of Vishnu? You call me nigger, sneering at my colour because you have none. The jackdaw has lost his tail and would persuade the world that his defect is a quality. You have all cringed to me, not for my greater nearness to God, but for my money and my power of making money and ever

> more money. But to-day your hatred, your envy, your insolence has betrayed itself. I am nigger. I am bad imitation of unclean foods, never sufficiently washed in his person or his garments, a British islander. I will no longer bear it. The veil of hypocrisy is rent by your own mouths: I shall dishonour my country and my race by remaining here where both have been insulted. Until now I have supported the connection between India and England because I knew that in the course of nature and by the justice of Brahma it must end in India ruling England just as I, by my wealth and my brains, govern this roomful of needy imbeciles. But I now cast you off. I return to India to detach it wholly from England, and leave you to perish in your ignorance, your vain conceit, and your abominable manners. Good morning, gentlemen. To hell with the lot of you. (*He goes out and slams the door.*)
>
> *On the Rocks,* Act II.

The bridges between the first three movements are both made up by questions with their promotive semblance of objectivity, and the end of the third movement is marked by that contemptuous and falling apposition, "A British islander." The second, third and fourth movements rise to progressively lower levels, the fourth marking a subsiding and exhausted temper. One last swelling congeries, each item increasing in length and virulence — "your ignorance, your vain conceit, and your abominable manners"— rounds off the diatribe by refreshing their memories. The "Good morning, gentlemen" is the prefatory phrase to the last chord, and when Sir Jafna left he might have been slamming the piano instead of the door:

> UNDERSHAFT. I want a man with no relations and no schooling: that is, a man who would be out of the running altogether if he were not a strong man. And I can't find him. Every blessed foundling nowadays is snapped up in infancy by Barnardo homes, or School Board officers, or Boards of Guardians; and if he shews the least ability he is fastened on by schoolmasters; trained to win scholarships like a racehorse; crammed with secondhand ideas; drilled and disciplined in docility and what they call good taste; and lamed for life so that he is fit for nothing but teaching.

> If you want to keep the foundry in the family, you had better find an eligible foundling and marry him to Barbara.
>
> *Major Barbara,* Act III.

Here there is less warmth than in the two previous examples. Consequently the crescendo is less marked and the passage free from the more vehement figures of exclamation, interrogation, and epizeuxis. The arrival at the summit is signalized by the explosive alliteration of "drilled and disciplined in docility," and the descent by the falling alliteration of "lamed for life." At first sight it might be thought that the upward surge towards the summit would have been better achieved, if the shorter "crammed with secondhand ideas" had preceded the longer "trained to win scholarships like a racehorse." But as far as sound is concerned, the assonance and alliteration of "crammed with secondhand ideas" provides a more effective approach to the alliterative climax; and as far as sense is concerned, the more comprehensive and, in this case, more important of the two phrases should be on a higher level than the other. Shaw uses the vehement rhetorical device of the scaling ladder very frequently and with a great technical skill.

With equal skill other rhetorical figures such as interrogation and epizeuxis are used to impart the rhythmical periodicity so necessary to the didactic emphasis required by polemical wit. So necessary, too, to impart the feeling of inevitability characteristic of both wit and style. And style, despite Middleton Murry, implies the introduction of musical and poetic qualities into "plain prose."

THOMAS HOOD AS PLAYWRIGHT AND PROSE WRITER

R. E. DAVIES

LITTLE is generally known about Thomas Hood as poet, either in comic or serious vein. About Hood as playwright and prose writer (he even wrote two novels) I venture to state that practically nothing is known. This essay is an attempt to fill such a gap in our knowledge of one of the most interesting and versatile writers of the nineteenth century.

Like Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and other Victorians, Hood was interested in the stage. It is interesting to see how he was influenced, particularly in technique, by his early connection with the stage work of Mathews. For instance, his humorous 'moral' at the conclusion of a poem, his 'ode' type of versifying, his versified dialogues, his comic rhymes in general, his coaching sketches, and even some of the titles of his own works, are all to be found in the early Entertainments of Mathews.

Hood's writings contain numerous allusions to the stage. Thus, in *The Elland Meeting* and *She is Far from the Land* he refers to the *début* of an actress; in *The Double Knock* to various actors, Italian opera, and the New Ballet; and in the *Ode to Perry* to the dramatist's plight on the first night of his play and to the alleged experiences of various playwrights, including himself, on such occasions. His interest in the stage is indicated also by his writing such pieces as the *Ode to Miss Kelly, on Her Opening the Strand Theatre* or *Miss Fanny's Farewell Flowers*; and by various references to the work of Sheridan and Colman, *The Beggar's Opera* (from which he borrows names), the overture to *Der Freyschutz,* and the spectre in *Don Giovanni.* From such allusions it would appear that Hood was not only well acquainted with a number of plays of various descriptions, but also that he possessed both a fondness for the theatre and a knowledge of stage procedure. This last is well illustrated by the following description, from his first novel, *Tylney Hall,* of the scene at a pantomime rehearsal, which reads like an acount of Chaos:

> The Sylphs scream from fright, and Cupid whimpers with hunger. All is noise and hubbub . . . Ropes break, hinges snap, water catches fire, and gunpowder does not

> ignite; spirits will not come when they are invoked, but the military march on, illegally, without being called in. Blunder begets blunder with the fecundity of the rabbit. . . . Oaths patter, and blows go round . . . Here an indifferent dioramist raves at a boggling scene-shifter; there an enraged machinist knocks down a fuddled carpenter's mate. In front a frantic composer storms and stamps at an unmanageable fiddler; in the background an impatient Pantaloon clamours about a misfit.
>
> . . . In the midst of this dramatic storm, the author of the pantomime runs to and fro, and bellows till he is as hoarse as a boatswain. . . . Anon he sits down, on any thing but the chair that is placed for him, but jumps up again, as if from a German stove, and rushes to clear the deck of a deafening chorus. . . . Sometimes he helps to lift a cloud, or props a house with all his might; sometimes he is seen bullying a dragon or kicking a giant,—extinguishing a moon on fire,—acting in dumb show for example,—scrambling up a ladder, hauling at a rope,—tumbling over a crocodile,—at last, quite rampant, swearing at all eyes and tearing his own hair, he very probably makes a sudden exit through a forgotten trap door.

Hood and Reynolds, his brother-in-law, dramatized *Gil Blas,* which W. M. Rossetti states was produced at Drury Lane, though Walter Jerrold mentions the English Opera House and gives a date—the summer of 1822. The only plays of this name referred to in Allardyce Nicoll's *Hand List of Plays from 1800 to 1850* are an anonymous pantomime entitled *Gil Blas; or Harlequin Everywhere,* produced at Sadler's Wells on 30 June, 1823; and an anonymous musical and spectacular drama entitled *Gil Blas de Santillane; or, The Horse Banditti,* produced at the Royal Amphitheatre on 11 June, 1821. As the plays in MS. licensed by the Lord Chamberlain date from 1824 only, both these plays are now lost; and one can merely suggest the first-mentioned as being the more likely to have been the *Gil Blas* of Hood and Reynolds. Jerrold has good grounds for his opinion; he cites a preliminary reference to the play, with quotations from some of its songs, which appeared in the *London Magazine's* monthly article on Drama in August, 1822; the September number's lengthy notice (in which it is described as "a five act

opera," with *Gordon the Gipsy, a meldrame,* as an afterpiece, which follows Le Sage's novel, with some deviations, in the early incidents); and the magazine's playful allusion a year later to the length of the piece.

In 1826, writing of a nightmare of Drury Lane in *A Dream,* Hood refers to "the failure of my first, and last, attempt as a dramatic writer, . . . the Tragedy of my Tragedy." "Many of my readers," he continues, "if I were to name the piece in question, would remember its signal condemnation." This statement may be only another of his whimsical "reminiscences"; and there is no evidence of his having written any such drama. Charles Lamb, writing to Bernard Barton on 29 September, 1828, mentions Hood's having "farces to supply the Adelphi for the season, a comedy for one of the great theatres, just ready, a whole entertainment by himself for Mathews and Yates to figure in." Hood certainly wrote an operatic farce entitled *Mr. Sims,* probably the comedy to which Lamb refers. This was produced at the Surrey Theatre on 25 February, 1829, and was perhaps the "one small rash act, committed at the Surrey," of which Hood makes mention in his *Ode to Perry.*

For Frederick Yates of the Old Adelphi Theatre, Hood wrote a brief entertainment entitled *Harlequin and Mr. Jenkins; or, Pantomime in the Parlour,* a prose monopolylogue "in which Mr. Yates Performs Eight Characters." This piece, together with an evidently pirated version of *The Spring Meeting,* is given in J. Duncombe's edition of *Mathews and Yates at Home* (1829), where it is stated that both were performed at the Adelphi, apparently in the same programme. *Harlequin and Mr Jenkins* is characteristic of Hood in its plays on words, the slapstick comedy of the footman's sitting down on a hot warming-pan, and the final scene of comic confusion, in which "an explosion takes place in the closet, which communicates with fire-works on the stage, and a grand blow up, with an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, closes the scene."

Hood also supplied the text of *The Spring Meeting,* described as a "Lecture on Peculiarities and Manners, . . . /portraying/ A variety of amusing anecdotes and tales; With the following/ Original comic songs:/ Spring Meetings—London Newspapers—/DONCASTER RACES;/ The Launch;—Lord Mayor's Day; /The Country Concert;/ With the humorous speaking to the songs,/ etc., etc."

This piece is in two parts, and is based on the style of Mathews's typical Entertainments: a thread of monologue serves to sustain light verses, short choruses, and prose monopolylogues. According to Walter Jerrold, it was reported at the time that Mathews's Entertainments were the joint productions of Hood and W. T. Moncrieff, but the extent of Hood's contribution is not ascertainable. *The Spring Meeting* deals in discursive fashion with the subjects mentioned in the description quoted above, with a few short anecdotes thrown in. A comparison of the different versions of *The Ship Launch* and *The Lord Mayor's Show,* given by Hood's son and daughter in his complete works, on the one hand, and by Duncombe on the other, would indicate that Duncombe's incomplete and inaccurate production is pirated. I quote, therefore, from their version:

> The day is bright, the wind is light,
> And gay with flags and streamers;
> From side to side old Thames's tide
> Is mobb'd with boats and steamers.

> . . . Ax pardon, sir, d'ye see that 'ere opening; them's the new Catherine Docks's,—Ah, I don't like new docks in opposition to old docks; they are not orthodox. . . . Bless me, there's an 'ulk! Ax pardon, ma'am, but that 'ere's the Hark; a wessel dewoted to seafaring parsons for pious porpuses . . . Now for a little lunching before launching. Tommy, give me the basket.—La, papa, it's left upon Tower stairs.—Lost the *prog!* Just what I *prog*-nosticated. . . . Waterman, what is that ship made of?—All hoak, ma'am, except the rudder, and that's helm.

The Lord Mayor's Show is similar, though here some of the speakers are differentiated, and brief 'stage directions' are given:

> Look at those constables' staffs, there's 'breakers ahead'.—Ah! do you know why them staffs are like Bees? —No, I don't.—It's 'cause they give such lots of whacks! . . . There goes Alderman Gobble!—No, it ain't,—it's Judge Cross!—and there ain't ever a *big wig* as'll eat and drink with *bigger wigger*!
>
> . . . Such hustle and bustle, such mobbing and robbing, All, all to see the Lord Mayor's Show!

Hood's light musical drama, *York and Lancaster; or, a School without Scholars,* presumably one of the farces about which

Lamb writes, is described in the MS. as "A Burletta in One Act." Incidentally, Hood's handwriting, in spite of what his son and daughter have to say to the contrary in the *Memorials,* is not easy to read. Hood himself admitted this, together with the fact that in his early days he used "an imitation of print, . . . adopted simply to make the reading more easy." *York and Lancaster* was probably produced at the Adelphi Theatre on October, 1829, after having been licensed by the Lord Chamberlain on 24 December, 1828. It is a short, light piece, set in a contemporary Yorkshire schoolroom. The part of Jeremiah Snaffle ("Ex-Horsedealer at York, now a Yorkshire Schoolmaster") was taken by Mathews, and that of Jack Wilson ("in love with Miss Snaffle, and residing at the School in disguise of a Mathematical Usher—afterwards a French Usher, and finally his own Father") by Yates. The other four characters are Old Wilson ("Father of the above"), Master Timothy ("a decoy pupil"), and Mrs and Miss Snaffle. The play treats humorously the forcing of children into uncongenial marriages and, more significantly, contemporary Yorkshire schools of the Dotheboys Hall type; here Mr and Mrs Snaffle are the predecessors of Squeers and his partner in *Nicholas Nickleby.* Songs are interspersed throughout the play, which concludes with a 'Finale' in which five of the characters join. The following lines are from the first song, sung by Timothy:

> When I was first a schollard,
> I went to Dr Monk,
> And elephant-like I had, Sir,
> A cake put in my trunk (*chorus by the music*)
>
> . . .
>
> For goodness we had prizes,
> And birch for doing ill,
> It was none of the Birch that visits
> The *Bottom* of Cornhill!

The dialogue tends to become tedious, for the speeches of each of the characters are overloaded with witticisms like the following:

> MAR. . . . to use one's own eyes in such matters is a sort of *eye* treason. Parents are very unreasonable.
> WIL. Oh, very! Talk of *beauty,* and they chime in with

duty. That's *rhyme,* not *reason*. And then to sacrifice the principles of love to the interest of money; as if, when hearts are broken, three per cent *Consols* would be at all *consolatory*!

• • •

MRS. S. How? Didn't I see him *put his face to yours*?
MAR. And didn't you see me *set my face against it*?

Hood also wrote a farce entitled *Lost and Found,* but the only available copy of this (in *Whimsicalities: a Periodical Gathering,* 1870) is merely a fragment, containing six scenes of Act 1. What we have of the play is light in tone, but gives the impression that it was part of a better play than *York and Lancaster*. The initial action is brisk, the dialogue competent, and the puns confined to the 'low' characters, the maid, the servant, and the linen-draper's son, though in Scene IV 'the demon of punning' begins to influence the conversation of Lady Beldragon. One obscurity is the description of Snap, the servant, as "brother of Sally," when he is the rival of Sam Spriggs for her affections. The theme is again the futility of marriages arranged by relatives, exemplified by the old plot of the eventual marriage of a young man, in reality the son of an earl, and strangely unchanged by his upbringing in low-class life, to the girl whom in infancy it had been arranged he should marry. I suggest this conclusion as an inevitable one, though we have merely the opening scenes.

In 1830 a series of 'Comic Melodies' by Hood was published consisting of songs written for the Entertainments of Mathews and Yates. Unfortunately, only *The Ship Launch, The Lord Mayor's Show, Valentine's Day* (very similar to the two already quoted), *Love has not Eyes, Lieutenant Luff: a Comic Ballad, Gog and Magog: a Guildhall Duet,* and the following Song (probably intended for a musical piece of the type in which Theodore Hook achieved such a success at the age of sixteen) are included in the section of the complete works devoted to these Comic Melodies:

My mother bids me spend my smiles
On all who come and call me fair,
As crumbs are thrown upon the tiles,
To all the sparrows of the air.

But I've a darling of my own
For whom I hoard my little stock—
What if I chirp him all alone,
And leave Mamma to feed the flock!

Hood's children mention his having written several songs for Miss Fanny Kelly's Entertainments at the Strand Theatre, including *Sally Simpkin's Lament; or, John Jones' Kit-cat-astrophe*; they write, too, of a nautical piece promised in 1828, and not completed by the end of 1834 (an interesting sidelight on Hood's characteristic dilatoriness), and of an unproduced humorous piece (no date). Hood himself refers in letters from Ostend to "sending the piece that was accepted by Price . . . for you (J. Wright) to offer to Yates" (1838), and to this farce's being "stopped by his (Price's) stoppage" (1839).

Necessity drove Hood throughout his life to write for money, and the above samples of his dramatic work illustrate well the type of entertainment demanded by the early Victorian public. The dramatic possibilities of his genius are best shown in serious dramatic poems like *Lamia: a Romance* and *Guido and Marina.*

Hood's first contribution to serious fiction was the *National Tales,* a collection of twenty-five short stories. He goes far afield in these tales, and his versatility is apparent in the diversity of the themes he uses; but the best, and certainly the most enjoyable, stories in this collection are those in light and humorous vein, such as *The Three Brothers, A Tale of the Harem,* and *The Lady in Love with Romance.* For the most part, Hood's plots are not as convincing, nor his incidents as probable, as the form of the short story demands, to offset its unsuitability for detailed characterization.

His first novel, *Tylney Hall,* described as a medley by both Lamb and Dickens, appeared in 1834, after he had been working on it for some six years. It is a curious jumble of humour, propaganda, moralizing, melodrama, light and dark imagination, and some poetry. If little else, it is an interesting illustration of Hood's view of the intimate relationship between the humorous and the pathetic in human life. Here, however, it is the humour which is more generally successful, offsetting to some extent the weakness of the serious characterization; e.g. Mr Justice Rivers. The secondary types are far more interesting as a rule; they are drawn in Dickens's mood of humorous exaggeration.

Thus Goff, the country constable, is Stupidity personified, the Squire is Rough Sincerity itself, and Dr Bellamy is Professional Incompetence; Mr Twigg is Conscious Success, from small beginnings, and Uriah Bundy, the ranting Methodist (a type particularly objectionable to Hood), represents Cant and Hypocrisy. But they are all conventional types, drawn from Hood's own novel-reading rather than from life.

Tylney Hall is clearly influenced by the eighteenth-century novelists, and there can be no doubt that part of Hood's success in humorous prose was due to an early reading of Smollett in particular. We find the same partiality for farcical incidents, comic interludes ending mostly in anti-climax, and malapropisms in the conversation of lower characters. Some of Hood's prose sketches are obvious burlesque after Sterne. *The Spanish Tragedy,* one of the *National Tales,* reminds us of the novels of the 'Terror School' of Walpole and others, with all its "atrocious contrivances. . . . for the perpetration of outrage and murder" and its association of tragedy with monstrous crimes. What particularly interested me in this tale, however, was the similarity between its incidents and the events at the inn described in Charles Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth* (1861): the plight of the two travellers in the lonely inn, the murderous night attack by the armed robber, the rescue by the military, and the fearful death of the robbers.

Up the Rhine (1840) is a novel in letter form. In his Preface Hood states that this work "was constructed partly on the ground-plan of *Humphrey Clinker,* but with very inferior materials, and on a much humbler scale." He continues: "I admire the old mansion too much, to think that any workmanship of mine could erect a house fit to stand in the same row." *Up the Rhine* proved very popular in its time. It consists of four prose pieces, seven poems, and twenty-six letters written by various members of a small family party on a health-trip to Germany. John Galt's *Ayrshire Legatees* (1821) was also based on *Humphrey Clinker,* and may have had some influence on Hood; but the personnel of *Up the Rhine* is strikingly similar to that of Smollett: Richard Orchard, "a dear, hearty, dead-alive, hypochondriacal old bachelor uncle," his widowed sister and her favourite maid, and his nephew, Frank Somerville. Though Hood is critical of German habits and administration, there is a real appreciation

of foreign landscape in this long discursive account of Continental travel, and such descriptions are not spoiled by any attempt to turn prospects into prospectuses. He writes enthusiastically, for instance, of Cologne Cathedral and the superb view over the Rheingau.

Shrewd observations, such as his summing-up of the aims of Prussia ("the Black Eagle has never shown any disinclination to become a Roc"), are blended with humorous remarks, like the maid's impression of Holland as "a cold marshy flatulent country and lies so low that they're only saved by being damned;" or Mrs. Wilmot's idea of the Dutch as having "a wash every weekday, besides the grand one on Saturdays, when they really wash up everything in the place except the water." The doings of their fellow-travellers, including a ridiculous Cockney and an equally absurd Yankee, are described also. The majority of the sentiments expressed by the characters are those of Hood himself, as stated elsewhere in his writings; e.g. the high cost of living and the lack of comfort in Germany and the contrast between the rapacious Coblenzers and the kindly Saxon villagers.

The unfinished 'domestic novel', *Our Family,* was Hood's last literary undertaking. He toiled cheerfully on to do what he could for his own dependents, and dictated the greater part of this work from what he knew was his death-bed. I cannot agree with his son and daughter that the majority of its chapters are "overflowing with fun and humour;" for his perennial humour is less in evidence than usual; but the work is more convincing and possesses greater human interest than *Tylney Hall.* The style of this story of a family which, through no fault of its own, comes "step by step, deeper and deeper, into misfortune and misery" is, as usual, easy and fluent. The outstanding character is the country doctor, drawn with skill and consistency.

Hood's later prose is generally more laboured and commonplace and his wit and humour often wire-drawn, owing to the excessive demand on his lighter vein. It becomes, too, more essentially digressive, mainly owing to the interruptions of imaginary readers or listeners—a device by which he allows the main narrative to "remain a little, and accumulate interest." There is throughout a certain amount of repetition in Hood, which becomes more noticeable in these later sketches; and his carelessness in detail is clearly seen in the inconsistencies of

some of them. As always, however, his versatility is remarkable, and he is greatly aided by his wide general knowledge of a multitude of subjects. With equal facility he wrote tales grim, exciting, or whimsical, imaginary letters and conversation pieces, or discursive sketches and fictitious reminiscences, extravaganzas, essays, and tales of diablerie. Above all things, he was a journalist with a touch of genius.

Many of Hood's stories lose much of their attractiveness in summary form, for their interest lies mainly in his treatment of them. Many are constructed on a very slender framework, cleverly expanding what is basically an insignificant idea. He fastens on to the slightest double meaning, as in his sketch *On the Popular Cupid*:

> I can believe in his dwelling alone in the heart—seeing that he must occupy it to repletion;—in his constancy, because he looks sedentary and not apt to roam . . . That he burneth with a flame, for so all fire burneth . . . That he sighs—from his size. . . . I doubt not of his dying,—being of a corpulent habit, and a short neck.—Of his blindness—with that inflated pig's cheek. But for his lodging in Belinda's blue eye, my whole faith is heretic—*for she hath never a sty in it.*

It should be remembered, however, that Hood wrote so much light verse that a large number of ideas equally suitable for prose sketches had probably already been used for versified narrative, and could not well be repeated later (even by Hood!) for prose re-telling. An example of typical grotesquerie is *A Legend of Navarre,* which illustrates well the point that Hood's humour, even at its maddest, is nearly always that of a man on close terms with death. Here a newly widowed Baroness found herself so short of room in preparing accommodation at her château for the King and his party, that she commanded the body of her late husband be "stuck bolt upright within a corner cupboard," where he slept "just like a kind accommodating host, taking all inconvenience on himself." That night, however, a forest ranger sleeping in the same room as the corpse, opened the cupboard to obtain something to eat. He felt "a something cold," which he mistook for a haunch of buck. Probing about the mass to cut off "a little collop" with his knife, he was horrified to hear the "cold meat" suddenly bellow "Murder!" The

Baron had been in a cataleptic trance, but he "soon forgave, for the revival's sake, a little *chop* intended for a *steak*!"

Hood was very fond of the epistolary method which he employs so successfully in *Up the Rhine,* often asserting the authenticity of the numerous imaginary letters to be found throughout his prose. His favourite form is the 'illiterate' letter, in which he extracts humour from mis-spelling—a fashion popularized later by the Americans, Artemus Ward and Josh Billings.

Although he is sometimes inconsistent, he manages this device very successfully on the whole. The following example from the concluding letter of *The Parish Revolution* combines a profusion of malapropisms with clever punning:

> Littel did I Dram, at my Tim of Life, to see Wat is before me. The hole Parrish is throne into a pannikin! The Revelations has reeched Stock Poggis — and the people is riz agin the King's Rain, and all the Pours that be. . . . O Mrs. Humphris, how I envy you that is not tossing on the ragging bellows of these Flatulent Times, but living under a Mild Dispotic Govinment in such Sequestrated spots as Lonnon and Padington. May you never go thro such Transubstantiation as I hav bean riting in! . . . . Mr. Barber says in futer all the Perukial Authoritis will be Wigs.

The style is varied considerably to suit the supposed writers, as the following extract from *The Pugsley Papers* shows:

> Deeply solicitous to gratify sensibility, by sympathising with our fortuitous elevation, I seize the epistolary implements to inform you, that, by the testamentary disposition of a remote branch of consanguinity, our tutelary residence is removed from the metropolitan horizon to a pastoral district and its congenial pursuits.

Anti-climax is sometimes found in the postscript, as in *A Letter from a Settler for Life in Van Diemen's Land*; and Hood's fondness for the letter-form is shown by the fact that so many of his 'Announcement' in *The Comic Annual* for the ensuing year take the form of letters to his publishers. Again, he states at times that various correspondents have submitted verses (*On Winter, A Conflagration,* and *Captivity*) which his son believed to have been written by Hood himself.

Before passing on to other examples of Hood's facility in prose writing, including his reviewing, I must make mention of an early fantasy, *Presentiment: a Fragment,* which stands alone in his vast output, revealing him as master of a serious Biblical prose which he never afterwards equalled. I wish that space permitted a longer extract than it is possible to give here, in order to illustrate the remarkable manner in which he sustains the same level of excellence throughout:

> It was in the days of my bitterness, when care had bewildered me, and the feverish strife of this world had vexed me till I was mad, that I went into a little land of graves, and there wept; for my sorrow was deep into darkness, and I could not win friendship by friendship, nor love (though it still loved me) but in heaven—for it was purer than the pure air, and had floated up to God. And I sat down upon a tombstone with my unburied grief, and wondered what that earth contained of joy, and misery and triumph long past, and pride lower than nettles, and how old love was joined to love again, and hate was gone to hate. For there were many monuments with sunshine on one side and shade on the other, like life and death, with black frowning letters upon their white, bright faces; and through those letters one might hear the dead speaking silently and slow, for there was much meaning in those words, and mysteries which long thought could not fathom.

Hood was an extremely good writer of whimsical reminiscences, apologies, and prefaces; in fact, of any short prose piece of a discursive nature, such as *The Portrait: being an apology for not making an Attempt on my own Life.* In the 'Advertisement' to the second edition of the *Odes and Addresses to Great People,* he writes: "To the universal objection,—that the Book is overrun with puns,—the Author can only say, he has searched every page without being able to detect a thing of the kind." In the various selections from Hood's poetry, the omission of his prose introductions to certain poems causes some of them to lose much of their point; e.g. *A Row at the Oxford Arms* and the Parish Beadle's adaptation of Gray's *Elegy.* Mostly, however, these prose 'prefaces' are unnecessary, as in *The Assistant Draper's Petition.* On the other hand, it is the poem, *A Butcher,*

which is really the interpolation in *Pythagorean Fancies,* being merely a versified illustration of the argument. His brief paragraphs vary greatly in merit, as do also his essays.

A type of humorous prose writing in which he excelled was the answering of correspondents, in 'The Lion's Head' of the *London Magazine,* 'The Whispering Gallery' of the *New Monthly,* and 'The Echo' of *Hood's Magazine.* The following are a few examples of his facility in this direction:

> We suspect H.B.'s 'Sonnet to the Rising Sun' was written for a lark.
>
> X is declined for a reason he can possibly divine. X ought to know Y.

Hood's verbal ingenuity is well exemplified by his lists of titles of imaginary books composed for the Duke of Devonshire, which include *Peel on Bell's System, Life of Jack Ketch, with Cuts of his own Execution, Barrow on the Common Weal,* and *Cursory Remarks on Swearing.*

I shall, in conclusion, deal with Hood's literary criticism and his reviewing together, as it would serve no useful purpose to separate them. His literary and artistic judgments show him to have been a romantic critic—quick to appreciate, but with strong personal likes and particularly dislikes that obtrude themselves at times too obviously into his criticism. His review of Knight's *Shakespeare* is really an appreciative essay on the dramatist, which shows considerable critical insight. Of this notice, Laman Blanchard wrote, in a letter to Hood: "I never happened to read anything that I enjoyed more . . . so thoroughly does the spirit to comprehend both the Divinity and the Dunces pervade and elevate it all." Hood begins by censuring the critics and commentators of earlier editions of Shakespeare, selecting Dr Johnson for detailed criticism "because an inventory of his defects would include most of the faults of his predecessors." He then praises the New School of Criticism in general, and Coleridge in particular. A comparison of the blank verse of Shakespeare and that of Milton is interesting, and he comes to the correct conclusion that "a strange fantastic phraseology was in vogue, not only in England but in France, long before the production of *Euphues.*" Although objecting to one or two of Knight's emendations and unnecessary footnotes, Hood praises

him for his laudable aversion to unnecessary alterations, his ingenious speculation, and his unostentatious but valuable information. Hood states his agreement on various points of interpretation, such as Knight's rejection of the theory that the island of *The Tempest* was any real island at all, his view of the character of Beatrice, and his assertion that the skirmishes of wit between Benedick and Beatrice are a proof of latent affection.

The most interesting of Hood's reviews in the *Athenaeum* are those which deal with some of the works of Dickens; for these show well a gift of critical appreciation which the majority of the minor works he had to review afforded him little opportunity of exercising. He does justice to Dickens's "amiable tone and moral tendency," selecting "various scenes of humour, pathos, and power." The faulty construction of *Master Humphrey's Clock* Hood attributes to Dickens's overpartiality to "one of the most unmanageable things in life and literature, a Club." He agrees with Dickens's treatment of all the characters of *The Old Curiosity Shop* except Quilp, whom he considers a horrible impersonation of the common theory that moral and physical deformity are necessarily associated. The warm-hearted Mrs Jarley was, in Hood's opinion, set in high relief among the cold inanimate figures of her wax-works by the artistic design of the author, and not by chance. The defect of *The Chimes,* to Hood's mind, is the startling contradiction in the character of Trotty Veck; in addition, "the porter is drawn too mild." In an appreciative review of *Barnaby Rudge,* Hood gives Dickens full credit for the powerful contrast between the lengthy peaceful and pastoral opening and the later scenes of desolation; but he protests against the over-charitable picture of Lord George Gordon, quoting from Coleridge's distinction between an enthusiast and a fanatic: the former a solitary, disinclined for outward action, and the latter anxious through his inward weakness for such confirmation. This review is spoiled by the way in which Hood allows his critical judgment to be affected by his personal feelings in considering some of the fermenting causes of the outbreak.

An even more personal note is sounded in his review of Clayton's *Narrative of a Journey and Visit to the Metropolis of*

France, &c. Here the unco-righteousness of the author leads Hood to conclude his review as follows:

> He acknowledges that 'modesty softly whispers in his ear' the admonition, on the ground of the inexperience and adolescence of his age, to draw his 'cursory, disjointed, and *terminating* reflections to a *close,*' which he does very effectively,—'Now to, &c., for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.' Here we may imagine that the organ strikes up; Sir George pulls up his collar, passes his fingers through his hair, and descends from his imaginary pulpit in full twig, to dine with Mrs. Bugg, of Bucklersbury, and her 'truly pious' family.

Another example of the over-personal in Hood's criticism is his so-called review of Horne's *New Spirit of the Age,* where he abandons any idea of reviewing it seriously for a lengthy repudiation of an admittedly bewildering passage in which he himself is described, in mistake for Hook, as "a wit about town, and a philosopher while recovering from the 'effects of last night,'" and his writings as tending to give an unfavourable view of human nature.

Hood's method of dealing with any work not meeting with his approval was to quote extracts and then show up weaknesses, substituting ridicule for abuse. On *The Way to Get Married* (by the author of *The Book of Economy),* for instance, he concludes as follows:

> Having extracted the whole juice of the work, to advise any one to purchase the rind and the pulp would be paying too bad a compliment to the 'Book of Economy' and the 'Way to Get Money', by the same author.

In his *Notes on Shakespeare,* omitting the comments on *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* which are obviously not intended to be taken seriously, Hood puts forward the theory that the blinding of Prince Arthur was "a particular act, intended for an especial purpose, expressly commanded by warrant" to disable him from the throne, just as "by the ancient laws of Germany the sovereignty could not be exercised by a person deprived of the sense of sight." The grim advice to "future painters and stage-managers" on the manner in which the blinding operation should be performed on the stage is an entirely unnecessary touch. In his *Note on Homer,* Hood states that the circumstantial truth of

Homer's descriptions appears to indicate that he must at some period have enjoyed the use of his eyes. In *Diabolical Suggestions,* Hood stresses the prominence of the part played by the Devil in a popular German story and discusses the overwhelming trial to which Margaret is subjected in *Faust.* In *Thoughts on Sculpture,* the versatile Hood turns to art criticism, giving his reflections on the Elgin Marbles in a short piece of well-written prose; *Etch'd Thoughts* deals with questions of draughtsmanship and colouring, and faults of exaggerated light and dark. Here it should not be forgotten that Hood was himself apprenticed to an engraver, and executed numerous comic woodcuts to illustrate his own works.

For some time Hood was the dramatic critic of *The Atlas,* a journal which first appeared on 21 May, 1826—the "largest sheet ever issued from the press" and one of the few treating of literature and art at the time. In an article entitled *Theatricals,* he stated that his aim was "to dispense impartial justice amongst those jealous, ambitious, unreasonable, amusing people called actors, and actresses." These pieces may be of general stage interest, critical estimates of plays or open-air entertainments, like *Vauxhall,* imaginative essays, like *An Imaginary First Night,* or verses on a contemporary play, like *Hints to Paul Pry.* As an example, here is Hood's view of the dramatized version of *Woodstock*:

> The novel did not seem to us furnished with plot enough for stage adaptation, and for want of a sufficient story, the play drags on rather heavily. We would have Mr. Farren to reconsider the character of Sir Henry Lee, against the next representation. . . . Let Mr. Warde, too, sober his transports of anguish a little at sight of the first Charles's portrait. . . . The language is sufficiently near the original; but the conclusion of the play is dismally huddled up. . . . We must object to Mr. Kemble's farce of eating in the supper scene. . . . Let him doff, too, those transverse sticking-plaster patches. . . . As there is a deviation in that part from the novel, the whole story of the bricklayer's accident down the front of the house, and the scratching of his august face against the roughcast, had better be omitted.

In one of two pieces entitled *Covent Garden,* Hood writes:

> It used to seem to us not quite Utopian, that we might grow a real indigenous opera . . . and that it might run a race of favour with any of its cousins-german. We have an objection to the divorce of music from its husband tongue, the language of its fatherland. . . . It discourses with difficulty and doubt. The words and sounds have, before translation, a natural agreement, like the features of a face, but which is disfigured inevitably when A and B exchange noses. We are more averse still to serious opera, which is generally bad melodrama made tedious with music.

I began this essay with Hood as playwright; I conclude it on his dramatic criticism, and have chosen my final quotation (*A Dramatic Criticism*) as utterly typical of the man. It would not, I think, have occurred to him that the effect of his sound critical judgment is lost in the absurdity of his concluding play on words; or if it had occurred to him, he would have shrugged it off. In truth, the demon of punning is the very devil.

> We have seen an actor play Hamlet, in the Ghost scene, with so little sense of propriety, as not only to draw his sword, according to the stage practice, but actually to threaten and make a lunge at the parental apparition with the naked weapon . . . In Hamlet—the Son of the Shade—the attempt at violence is unnatural and parricidal, and totally at variance with his character. He shrinks from bloodshed, though supernaturally enjoined, and remembers the ties of kindred. Witness his extreme reluctance to kill his uncle; whereas, a man who tries to stab a ghost, will assuredly *'Stick at Nothing.'*

THE MOOD OF ENERGY AND THE MOOD OF IDLENESS

A note on *The Earthly Paradise*

ROBERT WAHL

WILLIAM MORRIS as a craftsman was one of the most remarkable experimenters and innovators in nineteenth-century England. He inaugurated a revolution in interior decoration in England by his reiterated advice to his contemporaries to have nothing in their homes they did not "know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." In his lectures on the arts he anticipated the modern movement in architecture by his insistence that there must be an organic unity between architecture and all the "lesser arts" that enter into its service. As a typographer he laid down another fundamental principle of the modern movement in design when he declared that, although he himself preferred decorated books, he also valued books whose only ornament is the "necessary and essential beauty" that arises from the "fitness" of a craftsman's work for the use of which it is intended.[1]

In one of the finest and best-deserved tributes ever paid to Morris as a craftsman, his pupil, Mrs Holiday, remarked of his dyeing:

> He actually did create new colours . . . his amethysts and golds and greens, they were different to anything I have ever seen; he used to get a marvellous play of colour into them . . . when he ceased to dye with his own hands I soon felt the difference. The colours themselves became perfectly level, and had a monotonous prosy look.[2]

This avoidance of levelness and monotony is characteristic of Morris's work in virtually every craft he practised.

Why then is it that in *The Earthly Paradise,* so frequently regarded as "the achievement by which Morris will be chiefly known to future ages,"[3] a poem written at a time when he was creating some of his firm's finest designs, this "pioneer of the

[1] William Morris, 'The Ideal Book,' in *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist,* ed. May Morris (Oxford, 1936), Vol. I, p. 317.
[2] J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London, 1899), Vol. I, p. 374-375.
[3] A. Noyes, *William Morris* (London, 1908), p. 103.

modern movement"[4] should be quite happily content with "levelness" and make no attempt whatsoever at either experiment or innovation?

One cardinal reason is to be found in the distinction Morris drew in his lecture on *The Aims of Art*[5] between two moods that dominated his life: the mood of energy and the mood of idleness. Manual work freely undertaken in a mood of energy, he felt, brought happiness; the gratification of the mood of idleness brought rest or "pleased contemplation." In interior decoration there were old crafts to be revived and the whole structure of contemporary taste to be challenged. In poetry, Morris felt that Keats, and Tennyson's earlier poems "till Maud,"[6] represented a culmination beyond which no progress was possible.

To Morris, during the years when he was writing *The Earthly Paradise,* poetry was an activity of the mood of idleness, a relaxing and amusing "pleasure work of books."[7] This is why, in *The Earthly Paradise,* he so often tolerates and indeed appears to delight in a blurred imprecision he would never have permitted in any design for which he or 'The Firm' was responsible.

D. G. Rossetti, in a letter to the French critic, Ernest Chesneau, described the essence of Pre-Raphaelite art as "realism, emotional but exceedingly minute."[8] The diction of *The Earthly Paradise,* for all the poem's wealth of descriptive detail, is seldom "emotional" in Rossetti's sense of the word, and only rarely is it precise enough to be called "minute." Here is a typical passage from one of the best tales in the poem, *Ogier the Dane*:

> He stopped his pacing in a little while,
> And clenched his mighty hands, and set his teeth,
> And gazing at the ruin underneath,
> He swung from off the bare cliff's jagged brow,
> And on some slippery ledge he wavered now,
> Without a hand-hold, and now stoutly clung,
> With hands alone, and o'er the welter hung,

[4] The phrase is Dr Nickolaus Pevsner's; see his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London, 1936), p. 65-66, for a discussion of the importance of Morris's Red House in the history of modern architecture.
[5] Published as a pamphlet in 1887 at the *Commonweal* office, and reprinted with other lectures in *Signs of Change,* 1888.
[6] Mackail, *The Life of William Morris,* Vol. I, p. 44.
[7] ibid. Vol. I, p. 310.
[8] cf. W. M. Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters with a Memoir* (London, 1895), Vol. I, p. 129.

Not caring aught if thus his life should end;
But safely midst all this did he descend
The dreadful cliff, and since no beach was there,
But from the depths the rock rose stark and bare,
Nor crumbled aught beneath the hammering sea,
Upon the wrecks he stood unsteadily.

The effect here depends rather upon a studied imprecision: "some slippery ledge," "amidst all this," and a reliance upon current *clichés* of poetical treatment — "And clenched his mighty hands, and set his teeth"—than on any precise realization of emotionally significant detail. For a "realism, emotional and minute" used to describe a similar scene, one thinks of the "half-inch fissures" and the "loud dry wind" of Wordsworth's:

Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth — and with what motion moved the clouds!

Where suggestion is more important than exact delineation (as in the following passage, again from *Ogier*) Morris's descriptive method justifies itself:

In such wise was she clad as folk may be,
Who, for no shame of their humanity,
For no sad changes of the imperfect year,
Rather for added beauty, raiment wear;
For, as the heat-foretelling grey-blue haze
Veils the green flowery morn of late May-days
Her raiment veiled her.

Here the suggestions of fertility and abundance, and of the coming warmth of summer and of love, are all the more effective for not being directly insisted upon. But whenever Morris has to present a character in action at one of those crises of emotional stress which are a favourite subject of early Pre-Raphaelite painting, he

lapses into a world of spiritual monochromes peopled with figures as insubstantial as those "dancers of the faërie" of whom he writes in *The Man born to be King*:

> Who, as the ancient stories told
> In front were lovely to behold
> But empty shells seen from behind.

This deliberate imprecision of detail, besides being directly contrary to both the theory and the practice of early Pre-Raphaelite painting, contrasts very sharply with Morris's own earlier poems, inspired by the mood of energy. In the narrative poems in *The Defence of Guenevere,* and in the fragmentary *Scenes from the Fall of Troy,*[9] his interest is primarily in the drama of situation and of character. In *The Earthly Paradise* and in *The Life and Death of Jason,* which was originally intended to be one of the tales of *The Earthly Paradise,* his main interest has become the insertion of ornamental detail into a story which reads as easily in verse as it would in prose.[10]

Throughout *The Earthly Paradise* Morris persistently shuns the direct use of metaphor and prefers to have recourse to extended similes. Their decorative value is often very great, as for example in:

> Then through her limbs a tremor did there flit
> As through white water runs the summer wind,
> *The Doom of King Acrisius*

and:

> Desiring him as the spring yearns
> For the young summer sun, that burns
> His soft heart into fruitful death,
> *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon*

but each, being a separate free-standing ornament not related through any pattern of imagery to the structure of the poem or tale, for the moment brings the movement of the verse to a standstill.

In *The Defence of Guenevere* Morris makes very little use of decorative similes. Such similes as he does use are for the most

[9] First published in *The Collected Works of William Morris,* ed. May Morris (London, 1915), Vol. 24.

[10] For a discussion of this attitude to poetry see F. W. Bateson, *English Poetry and the English Language* (Oxford, 1934), p. 121-128.

part brief, and even where they may appear to be primarily decorative, as in these lines from *King Arthur's Tomb*:

> Alas, my maids, you loved not overmuch
> Queen Guenevere, uncertain as sunshine
> In March,

the comparison is, in fact, used to reveal character. The passages in the book which linger in the mind are, indeed, nearly all descriptive of character revealing itself in speech or action. One thinks of Jehane defying Godmar by the haystack in the floods:

> A wicked smile
> Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
> A long way out she thrust her chin;

or of the image in *Sir Peter Harpdon's End* of the two Edwards during the Hundred Years' War:

> Muddling right and wrong to a thick broth
> With that long stick, their strength;

or of the splendid opening stanza of *The Judgement of God*:

> "Swerve to the left, son Roger," he said,
> "When you catch his eyes through his helmet-slit
> Swerve to the left, then out at his head,
> And the Lord God give you joy of it."

Morris's tendency to regard poetry as ornament and a gratification of the mood of idleness during the years when he was writing *The Earthly Paradise* partially explains why so little of the fullness and essential strength of his imaginative genius enters into this poem. It may well be that there is a further reason. The leading themes of *The Earthly Paradise* have usually been taken to be the fear of death and a desire to make its coming "seem a little thing." Any careful reading of *The Earthly Paradise* can, however, lead to one conclusion only: that its true major themes are the impotence of the human will and the bitterness of frustrated love, themes which at this period in his life Morris found so poignant that it was only by treating them decoratively rather than dramatically that he could make them the subject of his poetry.

Even in those tales which apparently deal most directly with the fear of death, one or other or, as in the case of *The Death of Paris,* both of these major themes become dominant. In *The Love of Alcestis,* Admetus's fear of death is little more than a piece of inherited stage-business. What is stressed is his powerlessness to achieve happiness except through the aid of a god, and the

unhappiness of his wife as she dies, believing herself estranged from him. Human weakness powerless to escape the will of the gods, or else unable to attain to love and happiness except through their aid, is the theme of five tales;[11] human folly either threatening or else destroying happiness is the theme of eight more.[12] Sthenoboea's frustrated love drives Bellerophon from Argos; Gudrun's brings about her own unhappiness and the death of those who love her. Even into two of his most *Märchen*-like tales, *Ogier the Dane* and *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon,* Morris introduces characters, the Queen and Thorgerd, who are 'hungry' for a love they can never know.

These are the themes which give *The Earthly Paradise* its unity of mood. These are the themes which inspire the all-pervasive colour symbolism of the poem. The pages of *The Defence of Guenevere* glitter and blaze with all the colours of chivalric heraldry. In *The Earthly Paradise* the colour to which Morris recurs with almost obsessional insistence is grey, a grey which, as Morris uses it, is not the vibrant colour of Manet or Velasquez: it is a cold colour, or at best a neutral one. Its emotional overtones are best stated in Sthenoboea's lament to Venus:

> Black, black the days are, dull grey are the nights,
> No more the night hides shame, no more the day
> Unto the rose-strewn chamber lights the way;
> And folk begin to curse thee, "Love is gone,
> Grey shall the earth be, filled with rocks alone,
> Because the generations shall die out;
> Grey shall the earth be, lonely wrapped about
> With cloudy memories of the moans of men."

It is the colour of "cold-grey" autumn flowers; of the "doubtful" moonlight; of the hostile sky and sea between which Perseus sees the sea monster; the colour, too, of the beaks of the "grey-nebbed ravens" wheeling

> O'er the wrack of Senlac field,

"full-fed" though they are.

It is a cold, unfathomable colour when Perseus prays to

> . . . whatsoever God near by might be
> Betwixt the grey sky and the cold grey sea.

[11] *The Doom of King Acrisius; The Son of Croesus; Atalanta in Calydon; Pygmalion and the Image; Acontius and Cydippe.*

[12] *The Proud King; Cupid and Psyche; The Ring given to Venus; The Hill of Venus; The Writing on the Image; The Lady of the Land; The Watching of the Falcon; The Man who never laughed again.*

It is the colour of the universe of *The Earthly Paradise,* a universe in which the human spirit, thrown back on its own resources with no God to aid it, can know only frustration, self-pity or despair.

The only tales in which different colours strongly assert themselves are, significantly, the four in which Morris turns from this grey universe to a world of faërie in which charmèd heroes and heroines pass unscathed and unchanging through all vicissitudes to reach their lucky destiny.

Aslaug walks to meet Prince Ragnar through woods where the red-throated jay chatters above lush bluebells and pale dog-violets. Rhodope sails to her regal bridal in a scene which glows with all the colours of an early Burne-Jones stained-glass window:

> they came full soon
> To where the gangway ran from out the ship
> On to the black pier; white yet was the moon,
> And the sun's rim high in the sea did dip,
> And from the place where sky met ocean's lip
> Ran a great road of gold across the sea,
> Where played the unquiet waves impatiently.
> Now was her foot upon the gangway plank;
> Now over the green depths and oars blood-red
> Fluttered her gown, and from the low green bank
> Above the sea a cry came, as her head
> Gleamed golden in the way that westward led.

In *The Man born to be King,* Morris's passionate love of the earth and its abundance asserts itself in his description of a country feast:

> Slices of white cheese, specked with green,
> And greenstriped onions and ryebread,
> And summer apples faintly red,
> Even beneath the crimson skin;
> And yellow grapes, well ripe and thin,
> Plucked from the cottage gable-end.

In *Bellerophon in Lycia,* Bellerophon — who, for all the epic pretensions of this tale, is first cousin to Michael, the 'lucky' hero of *The Man born to be King* — once he has escaped from the world of Sthenoboea and her "dim grey garden," shines out in a steel helm and dark-blue kirtle, his sword-hilt bright with gems. These are colours which a grey cloak sets off rather than obscures; this is a hero who, as regards his gear at least, would make a

not unworthy companion to Sigurd riding triumphantly in his golden mail across the glittering heath.

But the world of *Sigurd* is a very different one from that of *The Earthly Paradise*. In this, his greatest poem, Morris returns to the mood of energy, and meets and comes to terms with experiences which, in *The Earthly Paradise*, he can only greyly symbolize.

THE USE OF THE FAIRY-TALE

A note on the structure of *The Bostonians,* a novel by Henry James

W. R. MARTIN

F. O. MATTHIESSEN[1] and Lionel Trilling[2] have remarked on the fairy-tale quality of Henry James's novels. In *The Bostonians* this element seems to me to be so carefully and cleverly built in, to be so significant, that it is worth examining in some detail.

In the very first chapter of the novel Mrs Luna tells Basil Ransom that Olive Chancellor is going to a party and that

> it was one of those weird meetings she was so fond of.
>
> "What kind of meetings do you refer to? You speak as if it were a rendezvous of witches on the Brocken."
>
> "Well, so it is; they are all witches and wizards, mediums, and spirit-rappers, and roaring radicals."[3]

"Witches"—the note is struck here and it is made to echo, discreetly but clearly, throughout the novel. Not that we pay much attention to it at first. (James does not let it obtrude, either here or later.) Mrs Luna, whom we already recognize as unreliable, offers "weird" in one of her flights, which we are inclined to take as more than usually extravagant because she has an obvious motive for being satirical at the expense of her sister, and for being amusing herself, before this handsome stranger. It is from his lips that the word "witches" first falls. As he has not yet met Olive, we take it as another hyperbole, merely suggestive. The way in which James makes this hyperbole 'come true' is one of the fine things in the novel.

Briefly, we come to feel that Olive Chancellor is indeed a witch, and that other characters in the novel, and the novel itself, conform to patterns established by an archetypal fairy-tale or romance — with, of course, important differences. We feel the presence of this pattern rather than see it, because James's tact does not allow the submerged 'tale' to crack and break through the surface of the novel, all the details of which take their places so securely and naturally in the picture of Boston and the northern States after the Civil War.

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[1] *Henry James, The Major Phase* (Oxford, 1946), p. 85.
[2] 'The Princess Casamassima' in *The Liberal Imagination* (N.Y., 1950).
[3] Henry James, *The Bostonians* (London, 1948), Ch. 1, p. 3.

First let us pick up some of the "witch" references. Olive's hand is "cold and limp"[4]; she sits "as if a spell had been cast upon her"[5]; she has—and our attention is drawn to this several times—a "queer corridor-shaped drawing room"[6] (A cave, perhaps?) her eyes make one think of "the glitter of green ice,"[7] and at the final climax they are "pale" and "glittering."[8] Her exhilaration was "one of the strangest he (Ransom) had heard," and he heard it only once.[9] Her meetings Mrs Luna describes as "female conventions;"[10] and we hear of the "hysterics of conventions."[11] When we are told that these Feminists are "sisters"[12] we are, perhaps, reminded of *Macbeth,* and, if this reading is valid, Mrs Farrinder, to be more particular, is probably Hecate. The "sisters" meet at Miss Birdseye's. Her drawing room is similar to Olive's in shape and its lamps are "hissing burners."[13]

(It is interesting to read what Lionel Trilling has to say about this in his essay on this novel in *The Opposing Self* (Secker and Warburg, 1955):

> The book is full of malign archaic influences; it is suffused with primitive fear. It is not for nothing that Olive Chancellor's sister is named Mrs Luna — with her shallow, possessive sexuality, which has the effect of conjuring away all masculine potency, she might as well have been named Mrs Hecate.

I think Mrs Luna is a little less sinister than that. In terms of the 'romance' she can, I think, be seen as a snare that the hero may be caught in. She is merely one of the Deadly Sins. The World, the Flesh and the Devil have their counterparts in the novel, but if Olive Chancellor is the Devil's adopted daughter, Mrs Luna is, herself, the embodiment of the Flesh.)

The girl, Verena, feels that "she was seized."[14] "Olive took possession of her."[15] Olive teaches her the "new truths"[16] and

[4] ibid. Ch. 1, p. 5.
[5] ibid. Ch. 2, p. 7.
[6] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 12.
[7] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 15.
[8] ibid. Ch. 42, p. 376.
[9] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 15.
[10] ibid. Ch. 1, p. 5.
[11] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 51.
[12] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 52.
[13] ibid. Ch. 4, p. 24.
[14] ibid. Ch. 11, p. 66.
[15] ibid. Ch. 11, p. 67.
[16] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 17.

"they threw themselves into study; they had innumerable big books from the Athenaeum, and consumed the midnight oil."[17] This last—"consumed the midnight oil"—allows us to see the subtlety with which James uses the 'tale.' It underlines the attitude of urbane detachment, and yet reminds us of the "black and midnight hags." The "new truths" surely correspond to the Black Art. Even the apparently minor point that Olive is an admirer of German literature and thought[18] is a glance at the Teutonic origin of many of the fairy-tales.

Most of these touches are light, but they make themselves felt — the trickle having been dammed up, as it were — in the dramatic climaxes of the novel. For instance: when Olive asks Verena to promise that she will never marry, "Olive wished more and more to extract some definite pledge from her . . . she only felt it must be something that would have an absolute sanctity for Verena, and would bind them together for life."[19]

The awful moment comes: " 'Yes, I am dreadful; I know it. But promise.' And Olive drew the girl nearer to her, flinging over her with one hand the fold of a cloak that hung ample upon her own meagre person, and holding her there with the other, while she looked at her suppliant, but half hesitating. 'Promise,' she repeated."[20]

The word "dreadful" has here its two levels. It preserves the surface texture of the novel because it has a loose colloquial sense. But it reminds us also, with its substantial literal meaning, that this woman is a witch. The "ample cloak," the "meagre form," "drew the girl nearer"—here all the earlier light touches are felt to have been pointers to the significance of this episode. There is a sinister suggestion conveyed in the description of the separate actions of her two hands, and, finally, the seal is set by "flinging over her." This is the casting of the spell over the maiden.

We notice here that James still manages to keep the 'tale' under the surface by not allowing the correspondence with the archetype to be too close. Verena does not in fact give the promise because they are interrupted and later, when she is ready to do so, Olive has changed her mind and does not exact it. Nevertheless, Verena feels herself bound and the spell is operative.

[17] ibid. Ch. 20, p. 147.
[18] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 13.
[19] ibid. Ch. 14, p. 95.
[20] ibid. Ch. 16, p. 14.

Verena, of course, is the fairy-tale heroine. The first time we see her it is suggested that there has been a "rainbow over her cradle, and wouldn't she naturally have some gift?"[21] "Purity,"[22] "innocence"[23] and "unworldly"[24] frequently refer to her. She is "like a naiad rising from the waves."[25] Often the very phrases of a fairy-tale are used for her: she was "the sweetest flower of character (one might say) that had ever bloomed upon earth."[26] From the fairy-tale too, we have the girl's obscure origin: "You would have wondered how she came to issue from such a pair."[27] "Her precious faculty had dropped straight from heaven;"[28] Olive "had come to consider the girl as a wonder of wonders, to hold that no human origin . . . would sufficiently account for her."[29] She was "fresh from the hand of Omnipotence."[30]

Here, too, James 'translates' the heroine of the 'tale' into Boston and the 1870s by making a difference. In the 'tale' she comes of humble but probably deserving parents. In the novel James goes one better. Mr and Mrs Tarrant are poor, certainly, but he, at least, is also "false, cunning, vulgar, ignoble; the cheapest kind of human product."[31] James makes a virtue of this change: it allows him to introduce a specifically modern manifestation of vulgarity — the hunger for cheap publicity. Thus he creates a convincing and appropriate contemporary setting for the translated 'tale.'

With Verena we find some very clear pointers to the 'tale.' It is the prosaic Dr Prance who says: " 'Perhaps she (Verena) could die and come to life again.' "[32] Then, Verena "listened to her mother's enumeration of the possible advantages of an intimacy with Miss Chancellor as she would have listened to any other fairy-tale. It was still a part of the fairy-tale" when she was sent off to Miss Chancellor's.[33]

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[21] ibid. Ch. 4, p. 26.
[22] ibid. Ch. 7, p. 44.
[23] ibid. Ch. 7, p. 47.
[24] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 49.
[25] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 51.
[26] ibid. Ch. 14, p. 91.
[27] ibid. Ch. 10, p. 65.
[28] ibid. Ch. 11, p. 70.
[29] ibid. Ch. 15, p. 98.
[30] ibid. Ch. 15, p. 99.
[31] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 48.
[32] ibid. Ch. 6, p. 36.
[33] ibid. Ch. 10, p. 59.

There is a remarkable passage in Chapter 33. Ransom

> had simply laughed and chaffed, and unrolled a string of queer fancies about the delightful way women would fix things when, as she said in her address, they should get out of their box. He kept talking about the box; he seemed as if he wouldn't let go that simile. He said he had come to look at her through the glass sides, and if he wasn't afraid of hurting her he would smash them in. He was determined to find the key that would open it, if he had to look all over the world . . . Verena had had no such sensation since the first day . . . when she felt herself plucked from the earth and borne aloft.[34]

Here Ransom takes the "box" from Verena's own discourse, and after our attention has been drawn to the simile, he turns it upside down, or rather, he metamorphoses it into the terms of the submerged 'tale,' which seems here, especially after Dr Prance's remark (even though it was sardonic) to be the story of Snow White. James manages it all very delicately.

The last passage quoted contains another example of a conventional figure—"plucked from the earth and borne aloft"—taking literal force from the 'tale.'

It is worth adding that, in order to prevent Ransom's rescue of Verena, Olive spirits her away. The hero tells Mrs Luna: " 'I have neither seen her nor heard of her for the last ten weeks; Miss Chancellor has hidden her away.' "[35]

I believe that it is the portrayal of Basil Ransom that is most enriched by the use James makes of the fairy-tale and romance. Ransom is the hero of the romance, and at the same time, satisfies the requirements of James's novel and our sense of what was true of the North American world after the surrender at Appomattox. To see how much James achieves in Ransom — how many birds he has caught, as it were, in this one net — is to realize how great his skill is.

In terms of the 'tale' Ransom is seen as the knight in armour that shines brightly because he has intellectual integrity, a sort of transcendent sanity and an innate chivalry which he has inherited with the rich aristocratic culture of the South. His heart is pure,

[34] ibid. Ch. 33, p. 270.
[35] ibid. Ch. 40, p. 352.

or as pure as we can expect in this world, and, because his mind is free of cant and his nature gallant, his strength is as the strength of several Miss Chancellors, at any rate.

Ransom has all the manliness of Lord Warberton and some of the finer qualities that James depicted in Ralph Touchett. This remarkable conjunction is brought about, in part at least, by the submerged 'tale.'

In Chapter 1, when Ransom has been told that Olive Chancellor, a formidable female, will invite him to dinner, he says:

> "When I dine out I usually carry a six-shooter and a bowie-knife."[36]

But this knight's real arms and armour are his nobility and his intellect. When Olive tells him of the "new truths," he replies:

> "I have never yet encountered in the world any but old truths—old as the sun and moon."[37]

Olive and Ransom recognize each other as enemies at their first meeting. Their hostility is immediate, inevitable and implacable (though Ransom's is of course screened by his habitual courtesy) and it has the diametrical opposition, but not the simplicity, of that of the warring forces of Good and Evil in the typical fairy-tale and romance. The fact that they are cousins strengthens our feeling that they are grappling, locked in combat. Their very names—Ransom and Chancellor—have medieval associations. Is it an accident that 'ransom' recalls the field and the crusades, and 'chancellor' the court and, perhaps, intrigue?

To start with a small point—the small points are often a test of how complete and convincing the large conception is: whereas Olive has a predilection for German, Basil is associated with qualities that are more particularly French. He refers to a French saying: "'I am of the opinion of that historical character — wasn't he some king?—who thought there was a lady behind everything;'"[38] he reads de Tocqueville,[39] and in New York he takes Verena to "a very quiet, luxurious French restaurant."[40] It is interesting, too, that he has mastered German, not because he just took to it, but "knowing it had a large literature of jurisprudence"[41]—in other words, for almost the same reason as a

[36] ibid. Ch. 1, pp. 2-3.
[37] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 17.
[38] ibid. Ch. 12, p. 77.
[39] ibid. Ch. 21, p. 159.
[40] ibid. Ch. 33, p. 275.
[41] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 13.

general will study his enemy and the assumptions on which his enemy's strategy will be based.

This detail—the opposition between French and German—is not gratuitous: it is organically part of the novel's pattern. German points, as we have seen, to the brothers Grimm, for example; French points to chivalry, and to the very heart of Ransom's significance.

We are constantly told—not before we have seen—that Ransom is chivalrous. His chivalry is not a mere social commodity, though Mrs Luna puts it to a severe test in a New York drawing room. We are told that, after the Civil War,

> he surrendered the remnants of his patrimony to his mother and sisters, and at nearly thirty years of age, alighted for the first time in New York, in the costume of his province, with fifty dollars in his pocket, and a gnawing hunger in his heart.[42]

The hero of our romance is poor, has suffered for his Cause, is in exile and longs for home—"he had a passionate tenderness for his own country" [43] (Mississippi). Then, though defeated, he proudly bears his escutcheon—the costume of his province.

James invests Ransom with the highest qualities, the full glory, of knighthood. Olive remembers "that he had fought and offered his own life, even if it had not been taken." [44] And there is that visit of his, with Verena—it is charged with significance—to the Memorial Hall at Harvard, which

> stands there for duty and honour, it speaks of sacrifice and example, seems a kind of temple to youth, manhood, generosity. . . . For Ransom these things were not a challenge, nor a taunt [Verena thought he might be embarrassed by this memorial to his fallen enemies], they touched him with respect, with the sentiment of beauty. He was capable of being a generous foeman, and he forgot, now, the whole question of sides and parties; the simple emotion of the old fighting-time came back to him, and the monument around him seemed an embodiment of that memory; it arched over friends as well as

[42] ibid. Ch. 2, p. 9.
[43] ibid. Ch. 7, p. 42.
[44] ibid. Ch. 2, p. 9.

enemies, the victims of defeat as well as the sons of triumph.[45]

Earlier, the word "sisters" has struck a note that was amusing, with, as we have seen, a sinister overtone of sorcery. Here we are presented with a conception of brotherhood, and it is the chivalric notion of brothers in arms, given with solemn reverence and in opposition to the "hysterical conventions" of the "sisterhood." We remember, too, that Olive Chancellor distorts all history, and makes of it a struggle of women against the tyranny of men. Whereas she is irreconcilable towards fictitious foes, Ransom accepts that real friends and real foes all "are folded in a single party."

(Lionel Trilling emphasizes a different significance in this Memorial Hall episode. "The young men had been his [Ransom's] enemies, but he feels bound to them by the ties of the sex they have in common, and the danger of battle had never been so great as the sexual danger of his present situation." In order to do justice to Trilling's interpretation, however, it is necessary to read this passage in the context of his essay.)

We can find, too, direct references to the lists and the trappings of the 'romance.' In Chapter 7 Mrs. Farrinder "would perhaps defy him [Ransom] to combat," "challenge" him, and "fling down the glove."[46]

Of course, an irony that is neatly pointed by James's use of the 'romance,' is that Basil, true to his knightly profession, is devoted to the service of women (almost, with Mrs Luna, to the point of disaster!) This makes nonsense of Olive Chancellor's theme of the subjugation of women.

James partly achieves his effect with Ransom by identifying him with the aristocratic tradition of the South. There are the "far-descended daughters . . . of his own latitude."[47] "He liked his pedigree, he revered his forefathers."[48]

All this in Ransom is opposed to "the Puritan code, the ungenial climate, the absence of chivalry"[49] — in short, to Bostonianism.

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[45] ibid. Ch. 25, p. 205.
[46] ibid. Ch. 7, p. 41.
[47] ibid. Ch. 7, p. 41.
[48] ibid. Ch. 21, p. 161.
[49] ibid. Ch. 6, p. 33.

What I have thus far shown about the presentation of Ransom needs to be pointed out, because as we read the novel we are far more aware of a very different tone in James's treatment of him—a lightly ironical banter, which has the effect of playing down the resonance of the 'romance' and muting its melody to a modern key. Time and again Ransom is "the Mississippian;" "the tough subject from Mississippi"[50] was under Verena's charm. (Incidentally, Ransom's case is interestingly close to, and yet significantly far from the 'tale's' convention of love-at-first-sight followed by separation-from-the-loved-one.) But even when this affectionate banter is having free play, when we are most sure that we are in the contemporary world, James contrives to draw strength and meaning from the romantic 'tale.'

For instance: when Basil finds himself alone in Olive's queer long parlour, we are told that "his conception of material comfort . . . consisted mainly of the vision of plenty of cigars and brandy and water and newspapers, and a cane-bottomed arm-chair of the right inclination from which he could stretch his legs."[51] Here James gives us, with indulgent urbanity, the clubbable gentleman. But there is more to it than that. With the Civil War and Ransom's part in it so few years behind, we sense the atmosphere—in the moderate comfort of brandy and water and the cane-bottomed arm-chair—of an Officers' Mess. In fact it even suggests the off-duty room at King Arthur's Court. In passing we may notice how James uses almost the same details to very different effect in Chapter 11 of *Washington Square*. There Dr Sloper is "in his chair (described in Chapter 28 as "well-stuffed") beside the fire, entertaining himself with a cigar and the evening paper." In the context, we sense Dr Sloper's self-indulgence and luxury, and it contrasts with the feeling we have that Ransom has worked for his comfort—he deserves to "stretch his legs." ". . . One notices too that this attitude of Ransom's is a repetition—in the same warm tones, but with more telling precision — of the characteristic posture of Ransom's prototype, Christopher Newman, who had "no taste for upholstery . . . He scarcely knew a hard chair from a soft, and used an art in stretching his legs which quite dispensed with adventitious aids." (*The American*, Ch. 6.)

[50] ibid. Ch. 8, p. 50.
[51] ibid. Ch. 3, p. 12.

Another instance: Ransom has made an expedition to Boston to try to see Verena after Olive has brought her back from Europe. "He stood in front of Olive Chancellor's house, looking up and down the street and hesitating."[52] . . . "He heard the door of the house open, within the deep embrasure in which, in Charles Street, the main portals are set, and which are partly occupied by a flight of steps protected at the bottom by a second door, whose upper half, in either wing, consists of a sheet of glass. . . The person who had issued from the house descended the steps very slowly, as if on purpose to give him time to escape."[53] Here "hesitating," "deep embrasure," "main portals," "flight of steps," "protected," "second door," "time to escape," all remind us that Ransom stands before his formidable enemy's fastness.

The pattern of the 'tale' requires that the hero should rescue the maiden dramatically in the end. This Ransom does in the Boston Music Hall. That this edifice should remind Ransom of descriptions of the Colosseum[54] is not accidental or just incidentally descriptive. It helps to suggest that the expectant crowd are there to witness a jousting tournament or trial by battle. It is a policeman that bars Ransom's way to the dressing-room, where Verena is struggling to free herself from the clutches of Olive Chancellor. The hero is single-handed against the malefic powers and the impatient multitude, but, in the end, Ransom "by muscular force, wrenched her [Verena] away."[55] He has won the "combat" Mrs Farrinder foresaw.

This climax is linked with the other earlier one in which the spell was woven. As Ransom "wrenched her away," Verena "suddenly shrieked,"[56] and that, it is not too fanciful to suppose, marks the breaking of Olive's spell. This reading is supported by this detail: as Ransom hurried her away, "he thrust the hood of Verena's long cloak over her head."[57] This time the cloak is Verena's own.

This brings us to the end of the novel and we can now see more clearly how James uses the submerged archetypal 'tale.'

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[52] ibid. Ch. 23, p. 177.
[53] ibid. Ch. 23, p. 179.
[54] ibid. Ch. 41, p. 361.
[55] ibid. Ch. 42, p. 377.
[56] ibid. Ch. 42, p. 377.
[57] ibid. Ch. 42, p. 377.

In the first place, the 'tale' presents Good and Evil in unambiguous terms, and by having it as his foundation, James makes us aware of the enormity of the evil and the size of the issues at stake in his novel. This depth of significance might otherwise have been too much overlaid by the novel's ironic and specifically modern surface. One way of explaining the relation between the novel and the 'tale' might be to say that the novel is, as it were, an allegory in reverse. In an allegory the familiar or real world is seen through the 'imagined' world of the story, but in *The Bostonians* the evocative 'unreal' story is seen through the 'familiar matter of to-day.'

Secondly, the 'tale,' as its presence and shape begin to be apprehended, acts in a way that has something in common with the action of metre described by Coleridge in Chapter 18 of *Biographia Literaria.* Metre

> tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement of surprise, and by the reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence.

Whenever the novel touches the 'tale,' the reader has the surprise of recognition, which, in itself delightful, arouses expectation; and yet when the 'tale' is recognized again—so perfect is the balance James achieves—the recognition is again fresh and surprising. James's tact keeps us, as it were, on a threshold: or, to put it in another way, we 'arrive' in the last page of the final chapter after having travelled eagerly from the very beginning.

Finally, James contrives to eat his cake and have it. He can use the 'tale' for a profound moral purpose and yet invite us to share a long joke at its expense. And again, he uses the 'tale' in order to poke sophisticated fun at his own characters and situations, for it is the differences between the novel and the 'tale' (e.g. between the lounging Mississippian and Sir Galahad; between the earnest Olive Chancellor and a wicked witch; between the holiday at Cape Cod and a military campaign) that are as important as the correspondences, and more obvious. He has, of course, to keep the 'tale' at arm's length so that our belief that he is writing about the world we know will not be disturbed, but the distance between

the novel and the 'tale' is turned to positive advantage. James's gentle but penetrating irony can play freely in the wide space that separates Boston from Camelot and fairyland.

A large part of our response to the novel is our wonder at the fact that two things as dissimilar as the novel and the 'tale' should be so similar. Then again, the obvious differences between them make us realize that life is a strange, complex and paradoxical affair, because this complexity is seen in contrast with the naïvely neat symmetry of the fairy-tale. Here, for instance, are the closing sentences of the novel: "But though she was glad, he presently discovered that, beneath her hood, she was in tears. It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed." They did *not* live (absolutely) happily ever after.

The fairy-tale has been transmuted into what Dr Leavis has called "a wonderfully rich, intelligent and brilliant book."[58]

[58] Leavis, F. R., *The Great Tradition* (London, 1948).

OLIVE SCHREINER AND DEATH

RAYMOND HEARD

LOVE was Olive Schreiner's strongest and most unselfish instinct: love of humanity, love of country and, most of all, love of the Karoo, which breathes so vividly in her books—the grey-green veld and the skies. So great was her affection for these that she insisted that she be buried in the Karoo. When she died her still-born baby (carried around with her for years), her dog and a pet meerkat were buried with her at Buffels Kop.

This resting place of one whom Field-Marshal Smuts described as "a flame that burnt too brightly" is enveloped in the cold of the Karoo night, and the white glare of the midday sun. All is quiet except for the sounds of the birds, the beating rain and the wind. As we reflect on this lonely grave and try to assess Olive Schreiner's achievements as a writer, one particular aspect of her imaginative life seems to throw light on much of the literary heritage she has left. This is death. For, if love was her strongest instinct, it is death that pervades her thoughts, her words, her very life. When Olive Schreiner describes death and the longing for an end to misery—as she so often does in her three novels—she is not asking the reader to try to understand the horror of it; she is trying to analyse death for herself.

Most of her work appears as an attempt to solve the mystery of the universe by discussing and analysing the intricate problems of sex, equality for all people, loneliness (which she had known as a little girl and never forgotten), and death—which would lead her on to ultimate truth, the final harbour for a mind in confusion.

Her outlook on life, her passionate interest in understanding it, and her unceasing questioning of things usually taken for granted, are often revealed through an attempt to analyse death.

The first proof of Olive Schreiner's deep interest in death is to be found in *The Story of an African Farm,* published in 1883. The very style is, I believe, adapted from the language of the typical nineteenth-century Boers, among whom she worked as a teacher. It is simple, yet harsh; and in it Olive Schreiner was able to show an awareness of the problem of cruelty not only of man to man, but of Nature (God, perhaps) to living things. Those self-reliant, solitary souls, Waldo and Lyndall, nurse a

profound affinity that never discloses itself to them as love. The scenes of the veld, the loneliness and lack of understanding towards each other, show the helplessness of man confronted by the inscrutable might of Nature—and the finality of death.

In *Undine*—an unnecessary and callous story of a lonely little girl whose only happiness, apparently, is a longing for death —we have an example of Olive Schreiner's artistic conscience.

Why, we ask, as we become more and more depressed, must one deathbed scene eclipse another, until at the end, under the South African moon, on a gravel heap "in her little purple print, with her feet crossed, and her head resting on one arm, lay Undine . . ." The answer is that Olive Schreiner had an inescapable obsession with impending death and desolation. In describing the pangs and sufferings of the helpless Undine, she is asking once more: Why must the innocent suffer; why must they die without love and understanding from a wicked world?

Olive Schreiner never found an answer to this question.

But her passionate and earnest search for the answer began when she was very young. The death of a little sister to whom she was devoted shocked her into questioning accepted religious tenets. As a young girl she had therefore to endure like a stoic the fanatical persecutions of other members of her family, who would not countenance a younger sister indulging in what was then called freedom of thought. Olive Schreiner was, however, undaunted and never lacked the courage to continue with her questioning. She found much of this courage through solitude, or what she would have called loneliness.

At the age of seventeen, when most boys and girls are sunning on beaches, or burning away their vitality on dance floors, a lonely Olive was teaching Boer children how to read, write and probably to question accepted facts like eternity after death. As result of this preoccupation with death and solitude, her ritings have a moralizing, didactic flavour, a tang that must surely have been acquired from the stern Bible-reading of the oers, and the life on the German mission station against which e rebelled.

The death of Olive's missionary father must have affected eply the lonely little girl with brown blazing eyes, long dark air, expressive face and emphatic gestures. Gottlob, like Olive

after him, was a solitary spirit, dreamy and emotional, with little worldly sense: he was dismissed from the Wesleyan Missionary Society for having engaged in trade, after which there was little else for him to do.

When he died in 1876, Olive Schreiner must have been much affected—her ever-pregnant preoccupation with death must have been forced out into the open and manifested itself in fervent, irreligious argument and thought. The failure of Gottlob Schreiner is obviously paralleled in Otto in *The Story of an African Farm*. Both were complete failures from a material point of view. But both were, in the context of the book, imbued with "the purity and innocence of childhood".

In addition to this obsession with death, the conflict of Olive Schreiner as an artist, with Olive Schreiner as a woman, showed itself in many ways.

She was always conscious of and surprised by the number and the affection of her friends, and was continually moved to most touching and disproportionate gratitude by the smallest things they did for her. Never did any human being take such love and kindness, however small it may have been, less for granted; though she gave much more than she got. She was always amazed and often bewildered by kindness because, in the desolate world she built up in her work, love and kindness were what her characters lacked in their sorrow and solitude. In accepting the gifts and help of the large and distinguished circle of real friends she enjoyed in later life, Olive Schreiner must have known that her death, with which she was greatly preoccupied, would bring real sorrow. But she would not have admitted this. In her moments—and there were many—of illness, she became bitter and loth to accept the world as she found it, or as her friends made it.

If vitality and sincerity were the passports to her friendship, there was one other qualification which forced immediate entrance to her heart. This was her need for love. She wrote that she always loved people better when they were not quite happy. Because she, and so many of her characters, were deprived of loved ones, whether pet meerkats or babies, she built up her conception of love on the basis that nothing was permanent, and that everything would be destroyed by a cruel God. Waldo, for example, is a budding rationalist who, discomforted when his

sacrifice is not consumed by Heaven, declares that he loves Christ but hates God. But although she was often superficially bitter, her own sufferings and losses in no way narrowed, but rather enriched, her understanding, and perfected her gift of consolation.

It must not be thought that her lofty code and her individual outlook made her a sort of dreamy visitant to the world of daily living, or that she was apart and aloof. Her deep communion with death kept her close to life all the time; nothing cruel or harsh could make her seek escape through dreaming while others suffered. On world affairs she turned an eye both keen and humorous, observing men and their movements with a shrewdness and penetration that compassed, on occasion, prophecies startling in their correctness. These political forecasts are a subject too great to be considered in this paper; but it may be said that her uncanny ability to predict the course of South Africa's future was founded on her acceptance of the spheres of suffering that she was accustomed to understand as a lonely child.

It may be useful to touch briefly upon her pronouncements on the 'Native Question', which for her had a profound and terrible importance that is becoming clear to us to-day. Olive Schreiner's feelings and predictions can be explained by her awareness of the suffering and un-Christian death which she knew so many of the African people were being made to bear for no real sin of their own.

To determine the attitude she had towards the Native people, as they were then generally known, we may cite a letter she wrote to John X. Merriman in 1897 (quoted by R. S. Alexander in the *Cape Times* of April 29, 1930). She says:

> It is the far future of South Africa during the next 20 or 50 years which depresses me. I believe we are standing on a slope—a long downward slope. We shall reach the bottom at last, probably amid the horrors of war with our native races, then not the poor savages, but generous races whom we might have bound to ourselves by a little generosity and sympathy . . . I see always that day 25 or 50 years hence; and it is with reference to it that I judge of many things in the present.

These, although a little muddled, are weighty words in the light of the current potentially explosive racial tension.

In 1912 she wrote, also to Merriman:

> We are seeking slowly and steadily to undo the work which the George Greys, William Porters and Saul Solomons sought to begin in this country; our social and moral ideas are sinking. We are narrowing our political and social rights . . . we are trying to withdraw even educational advantages from the mass of our people, who are natives . . . When we have had our big native wars, and dispossessed the native of his land, we may get cheap labour for the mine-owners and farmers, but we shall have created such a terrible proletariat as will be our ultimate undoing.

Even if she did write to Merriman and Rhodes, her weakness and inability to do more than make appeals must have meant a profound frustration. And above all, as ever, there was the death that was inevitable and unfair.

To Olive Schreiner sleep was indeed 'brother' to death. She and her father before her were essentially dreamers in an age that lightly accepted conventions and facts. Her books are studded with dreams, and in *Dream Life and Real Life* she seems to have realized the difference between the world she would dream about and pray for, and the world she was fighting to reform.

When Undine is at last allowed to die after experiencing all the horrors and disappointments her creator had lived through, she is not really dead, we imagine. Instead, she is asleep . . . for ever. Her hands are crossed on her breast; and we imagine her smiling, not looking up in horror at the cold night.

An interesting aspect of Olive Schreiner's dream life is the fact that she was a somnambulist. Stories tend to gather around great writers, and there are many about Olive Schreiner, one of which about her sleep-walking I found in a musty file. It was told by Mr B. Collingwood Boyes, postmaster at Matjesfontein in the Cape, where she stayed.

Mr Boyes says that one night he was awakened by hearing Olive Schreiner call her favourite dog; she lived but a few yards away at the home of a Mr Logan. On looking from his window,

Mr Boyes was amazed to see the somnambulist walking in the pale moonlight in her nightdress. He was afraid to call out or to waken her and he waited in some anxiety for her to return, which, he says, she did only after a couple of hours. She was still fast asleep and apparently made her way straight back to bed. At first she would not believe him when he told her about the incident the next morning. When he suggested that she take off her shoes and look at the soles of her feet, she came to realize that she had been somewhere the night before. Mr Boyes says that she was more amused than perturbed to learn that she was a sleep-walker.

Sleep and dreams play an important part in introducing *The Story of an African Farm*. We meet Tant Sannie, the big Boer woman, rolling heavily in her sleep, and dreaming 'bad dreams', as usual:

> Not of the ghosts and the devils that so haunted her waking thoughts; not of her second husband, the consumptive Englishman, whose grave lay away beyond the ostrich camps; nor of her first, the young Boer; but only of the sheep's trotters she had eaten for supper that night. She dreamed that one stuck fast in her throat, and she rolled her huge form from side to side, and snorted horribly . . .

Here, in a few words, is a revealing illustration of Olive Schreiner's understanding of dreams and all that went with them. The simplicity and absurdity of a sleeping woman are illuminated through her dream. The other dreams in the novel are more perplexing and more sinister; yet we feel all along that Olive Schreiner does not fear the dream. She sees it as a possible means of arriving at the answer to a life always shadowed by the death that can arrive at any moment.

Olive Schreiner asked a pledge from her husband before she died. She wanted her funeral to be completely private in order to avoid any semblance of a religious ceremony. Perhaps she imagined that this lofty solitude (the lack of speeches at the funeral and the solitary grave atop a Karoo koppie) might give her body in death the peace her restless spirit had failed to find in life. A woman of genius and also of immense force of character, she was never consistent, perhaps never wholly integrated. She was frequently condemned for having given up

religion. I believe that it was her obsession with death and the problem of cruelty to small children and helpless animals and equally helpless Africans that made her reject all accepted religious forms.

She once summed up her belief—or lack of faith in what other people believed—in these words:

> There is NOTHING but God . . . If I say that when I nurse a man with smallpox I am touching something far other than what seems to be lying there; if I say that when I go out into prison to see a prisoner I simply go to see myself; if I say that when I go out among the rocks alone I am not alone, have I made anything clearer?

That was Olive Schreiner at her most noble, the woman who fought against oppression and war and death, who refused to accept any kind of discrimination of race or sex, who loved her kind and made herself mourn its every passing.

Olive Schreiner's turning away from the religion of her fathers was determined as much by sorrow at the loss of her little sister and her father as by her heart and intellect. Many other young girls of the time would have turned to the accepted God in their moments of loss, but her deep scientific curiosity, and her need to seek for truth and unity in her conception of life, led her into revolt against the inconsistencies and absurdities of the explanations of the Universe offered her. It was death, as we have it in her novels, that prompted this rebellion and this desire to challenge a problem that she must soon have realized was insoluble.

As a very small child, her love flowed out to human beings, plants and animals, which, she imagined, were suffering—and suffering through no fault of their own. As a grown woman, Olive Schreiner had this same quality; she carried her dead child with her wherever she wandered, she nursed sick men, she loved dogs so much that her dead pet was also with her until she died. In *The Story of an African Farm* Waldo, Otto and Lyndall are allowed to suffer; but Doss, the little dog is not, even from age. It might be suggested that Doss is ageless not because Olive Schreiner is an amateur novelist and sometimes forgets chronology; but because she cannot bear to kill him. The men and women suffer because she can understand their fears and

desires. A little dog, however, is too innocent and loving to die or grow old. Doss must always be playful and innocent; he will not die because she will simply not allow him to.

Like her pets, the trees and plants she planted were carefully treated—watered by her own hands. Every plant and animal had its own place and its own personality. Waldo learns as a boy that every moment — every second — will see some miserable fellow-being hurtled to eternal damnation. This realization almost sent Olive out of her mind. Death must be avoided for all innocent, ignorant beings. But for those who can think and speak, it must be hammered home as reality, as something that is near and as constant as the night skies and the morning sun.

More could be said about Olive Schreiner and death, but it would all lead to the same conclusion: that death, more than life, was what determined the background of her few novels, her prolific correspondence and conversation. No two men, she decided, walk abreast on the road to the end. Where one soul has stood, no other shall ever stand. Each man's struggle (and it is always to a similar, if not identical, end) remains a mystery that must forever be hidden from all hearts but his own. The Bible which attempts to give us some assurance against the final curtain to our life was, to Olive, full of cruelty. Her comment on death might be very well summarized as follows:

> I don't want to go to Heaven, and, if God wants to, He can send me to Hell, and I will never ask Him not to, never. I know I am considered very wicked, but not half so wicked or so cruel as He is. Nothing is—not even the Devil. The Devil is glad when we go to Hell; but he did not make us go there on purpose and he did not make Hell; he did not make himself, and I am sorry for him.

As this letter shows, Olive Schreiner, while contemplating death, could even sympathize with the Devil. For the Devil, whoever he might be, is yet another tortured being in a world dominated by God and His Death.

EARLY TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICA

ERIC ROSENTHAL

WHO was the first teacher of the English language in South Africa? As with so many questions, it is easier to put forward than to supply a 'tidy' answer. To-day, when for the first time in more than a century and a half, the need for drastic improvement has been universally acknowledged, the subject has acquired a topicality and importance that it scarcely possessed in bygone years.

Most probably some forgotten regimental schoolmaster, attached to a unit which carried out the first British Occupation of the Cape, might claim the honour; but his identity has been lost in the mists of history, as has that of his successors in the earlier years of regular civilian administration. Since, as far as I know, no effort has yet been made to carry out a systematic investigation of the subject, the facts here set down may later be amplified.

In the United Kingdom itself, it was only in the Victorian era that English became disentangled from abstract grammar and syntax. Even the study of English literature cannot be traced back, under that name, much earlier than 1860. Unfortunately, the advent of English in the schools of South Africa acquired a political complexion, through the policy of the early Cape governors in substituting that language for the original Dutch.

On December 8, 1812, Governor Sir John Cradock wrote from Government House, Cape Town, to Earl Bathurst at the Colonial Office in London:

> I have the honour to acknowledge Your Lordship's letter of the 3rd of July, delivered to me by Mr Turr, recommended by Your Lordship to fill the vacant situation of Rector of the Grammar School in this Colony. I beg your Lordship will accept of my best thanks for the attention you have given to this important and very interesting subject, and I have every reason to believe that Mr Turr will prove a valuable acquisition. The general system of education has been lately extended throughout the settlement, and a person to preside over the principal seminary at Cape Town was peculiarly required.
>
> It had been my object to have procured an English

gentleman, as I conceived it to be of the highest importance that pupils of the higher classes in this Colony should make equal progress in the English as well as the Dutch language: but Mr Turr's qualifications, in every other respect, are so satisfactory, and he appears so sensible of the value of the acquisition of the English language, that I feel assured, under the regulations I shall enjoin, this material point will not be neglected . . .

In a separate note to F. E. Turr, Esq., His Excellency informs him: "I think it is my duty to say that from the rising generation I must exact a perfect knowledge of the English language, indispensable to the admission to offices . . ."

Henceforth the expression 'English teacher' occurs from time to time in the records, although the adjective applied rather to his national origin than to his actual subject of tuition. Official encouragement was given in a notice dated 19 February, 1813:

> His Excellency the Governor (Sir John Cradock) conceives it to be necessary to make known his sentiments upon the general acquirement of the English Language, that the earliest attention may be paid to this essential Study by Parents and all Persons concerned in the Education of the Youth of this Colony.
>
> His Excellency daily finds that not only the dispatch of all Business in the Public Offices suffers through the want of able Translators, but he equally feels, and it must be universally acknowledged, that the mere translation, so contrary to the spirit and effect of Government, can afford but a very imperfect and limited communication in all transactions.
>
> His Excellency therefore, however he may still yield to the force of superior merit in qualifications in some respected cases of the present day, will consider himself obliged in future appointments, among the rising generation, who have had the opportunity of attainment, to make the possession of the English Language an indispensable condition.
>
> His Excellency well knows that the thanks of those young persons will soon be due to him, when they shall find the advantage of this Ordination, not only in its immediate benefits in the transaction of the various Business connected

> with the Government within this Colony, but in not leaving them confined to the Boundaries of the Cape of Good Hope, as it will enable them to enlarge the sphere of their talents considerably and pursue one common course with all His Majesty's Subjects throughout his Dominions.

Writing to Governor Lord Charles Somerset on 31 January, 1825, Sir John Truter, Chief Justice, advised that the recently-formed Dutch Reformed Synod "has recommended to your Excellency the Establishment of a Seminary or Theological School, in which boys could receive a preparatory education for the Church, and where at the same time Catechists and Schoolmasters for the lesser branches of Instruction, both in English and Dutch, could be formed and properly qualified . . ." Later Sir John observes:

> In deliberating on the subject of religious instruction, the Synod considers it especially necessary that the Catechists and Schoolmasters should be brought up to teach both the English and Dutch Languages, and at the same time, in order on their part to promote the extension of the English also as far as possible, they resolve to cause the English Translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, which contains the groundwork of our Reformed Religion, to be printed . . . so that the Children of Parents belonging to the Reformed Church can learn the first principles of religion in the English language likewise.

Not only was English now taught in the schools for European children, but it was also available for the coloured community. Thus we are told by the famous Dr John Phillip:

> In 1823 it was proposed to introduce the English Language at the Missionary Station at Theopolis, and the Usher of the School at this Institution and a few Hottentot boys, were selected and placed under the tuition of Mr. Matthews, a gentleman who kept a respectable Boarding School at Salem, 15 miles distant from Theopolis, and who had kindly engaged to instruct them in the English Language with this view . . .

The most detailed and enlightening account of the methods of teaching English at the Cape in the very early days survives from the pen of Mr William Beddy, a schoolmaster who called himself a "Graduate of the University of the Holy Trinity, Dublin." Mr Beddy was engaged in August 1823 as tutor "to the family of a gentleman going to the Cape of Good Hope," and, finding himself

there in receipt of "a very limited salary," decided to take on a number of local boys as pupils. Within a short while he had 32 of them, for whose benefit he set up in the Heerengracht, Cape Town, what he described, in honour of his Irish homeland, as the Feinaiglian School. Mr Beddy sent a prospectus and detailed account of it to Earl Bathurst in April, 1826: "This Establishment," he says, "which was opened on Tuesday, the 10th day of August, contains Two Classes,—the First and Second Preparatory, so denominated with reference to the Classical Course, which is usually commenced at the Feinaiglian Institution after the Third Half-Year." The Headmaster set out the various subjects dealt with, and added: "On entering the intermediate or Third Preparatory Class, having in the First or Second, which occupy one Year, acquired a knowledge of the English and Latin Grammars."

The names of some of the original pupils are familiar in South Africa even to-day. Starting with Botha (no Christian name given), there are Green Snr. and Jnr., Hertzog, Horak, Hurter, Mabille and Sheppard Jnr.

"Some of the pupils of this class," explained Mr Beddy, "could repeat by rote the Definitions of the Parts of Speech: but not one of them had any idea of distinguishing one sort of Word from another. Though no one of this Class had been much more than Four Months at the Feinaiglian School, nor employed more than Two Hours of each Day at Grammar, yet it is hoped, that the majority of them will be found tolerably well acquainted with the Parsing and Analysis of Simple Sentences."

The Second Preparatory, or Senior Class comprised five boys, no fewer than four of whom bore the name of Ingram. In the Fifth was only Master Sheppard Sen. It was reported that they had a fair knowledge of Latin, but were "almost totally ignorant of English grammar."

The Feinaiglian Institution had a detailed syllabus, in which, for the First Preparatory Class, are given as Objects of Study: "Spelling, Reading, English Grammar, Arithmetic and Writing." The same, plus Latin Grammar, were dealt with in the Second Class and the Third Class. It is noteworthy that numbers of classics are set down for reading in foreign languages, including the *History of Greece* in French, *Telemaco* and *Metastasio* in Italian, four of the *Psalms* in Hebrew, but that not a single book was prescribed to be read in English!

Plans, however, were already afoot in 1829 for the drastic reform of education through the Zuid-Afrikaansche Atheneum, which later became the South African College. A so-called Bible and School Commission had, since 1813, come into operation, supported by voluntary subscription, making its main object the provision of education for the poor. In a preliminary memorandum, dated 14 October, 1828, and prepared after a meeting held in the vestry of the Dutch Reformed Church under the Chairmanship of Sir John Truter, it was recommended that there should be at least two teachers: one in the English and the other in the Dutch language. Of the first-named it was added:

> He who gives instruction in the English tongue, should teach the ancient languages with the theory, history and practice of English Grammar and Literature, so as to impart habits of investigation and of discussion, and composition in English and an acquaintance with the history and moral and civil policy of the species.

When, a few months later, the South African Athenaeum really came into existence, the first holder of the position of "English Professor of Classics" was the Reverend Abraham Fauré, Bachelor of Divinity. At the public examination, which marked the end of the scholastic year, speeches were delivered in Latin and English. In 1836 the joint Chair of English and Classics fell vacant and the work was farmed out among three different professors. In its communications with one of them, Professor Pillans of Edinburgh, the Senate specially laid down that the incumbent must have a "correct English pronunciation and sound religious and moral principles."

Ultimately, in 1840, Dr Adamson arrived and took over the care of English and Classics. Among his achievements was the production in 1845 of a book on English grammar, towards the cost of which the Senate of the South African College, as it had become, contributed £25. What this book contained is unknown, as no copies survive.

Of great advantage to the country was the coming, during the late 1830s, of the great astronomer, Sir John Herschel, who took time off from his observations of the heavens to prepare a scheme for Public Education, upon which rests almost the entire existing system of the Cape Province. One result of his historic

memorandum was the importation to the Cape of a man who ultimately became Superintendent-General of Education, Dr (afterwards Sir) Langham Dale. As Professor of English and Classics, he first took office in the South African College in 1847.

The teaching of English was, however, no longer confined to the South African College, with its ambitious programme. In 1830 Mrs. Swaving's French Academy for Young Ladies in Roeland Street, Cape Town, listed English among the subjects taught, with a special footnote: "An English Lady attends this Class daily."

Shortly after, in 1831, there appeared an entertaining advertisement of J. C. Golding's English Grammar, Commercial and Mathematical Academy of No. 43 Loop Street. "Mr. Golding," we are told, "solicits earnestly a trial (from those parents and guardians who are unacquainted with this abbreviated, simplified and expedient mode of tuition) as the only criterion by which the rational merits and decided advantages of his methodical establishment can be either justly estimated or discriminated, from those very clumsy time-killing forms that are nowadays so incoherently adopted . . ." A mysterious footnote says: "It is presumed, that supplying the Ellipses of the Relative, and Verb-to-be will not be construed as pedantic paradigms. The above Obelisks denote them to be usually understood." Immediately below we are told: "Adult Gentlemen appositely instructed in Analytical and Synthetical Parsing."

Mr C. E. Boniface, Sworn Translator and Master of Languages also taught the Spanish guitar, and could "accommodate his pupils and others with elementary Books of all descriptions: such as Grammars and Dictionaries, in French, Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Languages . . ."

At The Paarl Mr Robert Sanders, another English teacher, was specially "sanctioned by the Bible and School Commission" to accommodate a limited number of boarders, washing included at no extra charge, but he did not particularize on his methods of tuition.

In 1838 Archibald Brown established his Commercial, Mathematical and Classical Academy, the motto of which was *Indocti discant et Ament Meminisse Periti.* Formerly "Teacher of Latin and Greek at the Grammar School in Aberdeen and subsequently Teacher of the Higher Branches of Mathematics at the Academy

of Stonehaven," Mr Brown offered tuition in "English Grammar, Elocution, Writing and Stenography," plus a variety of other subjects.

January 7, 1839, saw the opening, under the immediate direction of the Right Reverend Dr Griffiths, Vicar Apostolic, of the first Catholic School at the Cape, the Mercantile and Catholic Academy in Harrington Street. Here the syllabus also included English, "Grammar, Reading, etc., as well as Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping and Geometry."

Rather hazier were the activities of the English Establishment for Young Ladies, conducted by the Misses Page at No. 125 Long Street, "where" we are informed, "instruction is given in every branch of Female Education . . ."

Dr A. N. E. Changuion, the Swiss scholar responsible for the first Afrikaans vocabulary, when he listed what he considered "mistaken" spellings and pronunciations of Dutch, was also able to offer, at his academy, tuition in English, including "the Art of Translation . . ." One curious feature about this establishment appeared in 1843 in its prospectus: "It must be clearly understood, that the age for admission, being that of Mr. C's children, will necessarily vary every year, and that the character of the school will therefore be progressive." In 1844 the curriculum was defined on more established lines: "The ordinary course of instruction comprises whatever is practically useful in this Colony, to wit:—A thorough knowledge of English and Dutch, including composition, Translation and Elocution . . ."

At the South African College, an advertisement signed by James Adamson, now also Secretary, set out in 1844, that the "English and Classics Department cover five divisions." In the first, second and third years this dealt with Grammar, Analysis and Latin. In the fourth, Logic was added, and in the fifth, Mental Philosophy.

English was also specially listed among the subjects taught at the establishment of Mrs Franks, at No. 57 St. George's Street, who started operations in 1845, and who conveniently added: "Ladies whose engagements will permit them to devote only a small portion of their time to the completion of their education, will find this a desirable opportunity of accomplishing this object. Terms are moderate."

At the Misses Ruffe's Select Establishment for the Education of Young Ladies, at No. 53 St. George's Street, there was also

instruction in the English language. For the First Class or "Finishing Pupil" the fees were £1 a month. A seat in church came to £1. 2. 6. and washing £5 per annum. "Each Young Lady to be provided with a Silver Fork and Spoon, six Table Napkins, Bedding, etc."

But these amenities were no longer confined only to Cape Town. Hundreds of miles away on the Eastern Frontier at Grahamstown, there was a rival Boarding School. According to a notice in 1849,

> Mrs. and the Misses Eedes, assisted by Masters, receive a limited number of Young Ladies into their Establishment, where Instruction in the various branches of Education is pursued upon the system of Schools of the first eminence, both of London and Paris. Mrs. Eedes assures those parents, whose daughters may be placed entirely under tuition, that it will be her conscientious effort to promote the religious and intellectual improvement of the pupil, and to combine with every possible educational advantage, maternal vigilance as regards the morals, health and formation of the mind and manners of those entrusted to her care . . .

At the very head of the subjects given is "English Instruction," while a footnote adds: "A superior handwriting is established in a few lessons."

A contemporary time-table of the Government School in Grahamstown sets out that the time from 11.30 to 12.30 "is devoted to English Grammar, Reading, etc."

A major step in the advancement of the study of English was the decision, taken by the Colonial Government in 1858, to set up a Board of Public Examiners in Literature and Science. Its purpose was to test young men wishing to take up a career in the Civil Service, as well as those desiring a professional career in Land Surveying and one or two other sciences. From this time there survive detailed examples not only of syllabuses, but also of examination papers. For a First Class Certificate in Literature and Science, Languages, History and Literature were bracketed together.

SPOKEN ENGLISH AND THE TRAINING OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

PHYLLIS SCARNELL LEAN

SOONER or later almost everybody has to speak in public. Many people realize this and join classes in an attempt to acquire the art.

The teacher runs into a number of snags; the first and greatest is usually lack of vocabulary. It is a painful business watching the students struggling with their poverty. Sometimes the difficulty arises because English is not the mother tongue, but the foreign student is easily encouraged to draw from the riches of his own language and to take a chance. His hasty and sometimes inaccurate translations are at least vigorous and colourful and good enough to enable him to hurry along with his real purpose. The most poverty-stricken is generally the English-speaking South African.

Vocabulary building is accomplished in many ways. The vocabulary notebook of the foreign language teacher is used; the active 'never-pass-a-strange-word' use of the dictionary is encouraged; word games are devised; the vocabulary exercises in *Reader's Digest* and other magazines are popular but there is no real substitute for intelligent reading. Without the background of 'set-book' English, without an abiding love for the language and an insatiable hunger for the rich food of English words, progress is slow indeed.

The diet of the student is so meagre; he has no standard of taste and yet rarely fails to respond to the best when it is presented to him. The fact of his having joined a class is evidence of a willingness to respond. So we read to them, prose and verse and especially the *Authorized Version of the Bible,* some of Shakespeare and of the Americans, Emerson and Abraham Lincoln. The great chords roll out and wake an echo in minds dulled by commercial English and cinema-screen American.

The readings must be good, brief and easily comprehended; the background of the piece and of the man who wrote it sketched in with swift and vivid strokes; the presentation full and firm and vigorous, not over-dramatized but offered with an enthusiasm which infects the student.

Then they begin to value 'words as tools and tones as gestures' and want to add to their own stock.

People who have learned elocution are often very difficult to teach and present special problems. They must be purged of their painfully acquired niceties of voice and manner.

We try to preserve the good qualities of the natural voice of the student, leaving him with his own accent and vowel pattern if these are not offensive or incomprehensible.

Lower and slower are the two rules—and learning to value the pause. How afraid people are of the silent moment, hurrying almost always to fill it with two pennyworth of pomposity. The pause, well used, can be a great shaft of light across the picture.

Breathing exercises are taught to render the voice more mellow and to lessen the risk of straining the vocal chords. Tape recorders are used to help the student to hear himself as others hear him—and what a shock he has!

When the student has a few new words to add to his thread-bare stock and can produce something more than a high-pitched twitter we begin to teach speech building. There is generally no time to delve into the classical rules of Rhetoric and no opportunity to analyse masterpieces of earlier days.

Before we attempt the simplest speech plan however, we try to uncover a wealth of ideas. Higgledy-piggledy lists are compiled by free-flowing association and then only is a classification attempted.

The student of few ideas must content himself with the three-deck classification 'bread, jam, bread'—beginning, middle, end. The man with more notions achieves bread, butter, ham, butter, bread, and his ham, the middle section of a five-part speech, is sometimes very good.

Classification is a science which must be taught to many. Those who have some scientific education pick up the idea quickly enough; the natural orders of the botanist or the periodic law of the chemist stir vaguely in their minds. In others, classification is a new concept altogether and must be related to some known and simple daily habit. The housewife is asked, for example, to imagine herself putting away her shopping. "Do you put the marmalade in the same cupboard as the boot polish; the clean sheets in the tool shed, the library books in the bathroom?" These are the simple questions we ask and classification begins.

We next pay attention to methods of opening and closing speeches. When a satisfactory opening is found, the topical, the warm-hearted, the original, the unusual or the stirring, the body of the speech falls into place. We are firm about closing and ruthlessly discourage the "one last word" and the "before I sit down Mr Chairman"—the people who say they are going to conclude and never do. "Forever-amber" types we call them, like traffic lights stuck on the yellow.

Much attention is paid to the proper use of quotations, anecdotes and jokes. The novice imagines that a good speech is composed of a lot of jokes loosely strung together. We learn to treat humour with proper respect but have yet to discover how to make a humorist out of those students in whom the God-given quality is lacking.

The pursuit of the precisely appropriate quotation is an excellent exercise in itself and a stimulus to the catholic reading regarded as so essential in vocabulary building.

From the very first lesson the student is encouraged to speak rather than to write; the written speech read aloud or imperfectly memorized is deadly and indeed the two arts, speech and writing, are very different.

The problem of nervousness and its psychosomatic effects are dealt with by physiological and psychological methods of training and discipline, but we try never to conquer nervousness completely, realizing that the fluttering pulse is the fire of speech. The secret lies in encouraging the student that he need not fear his own nervousness.

Throughout the training, emphasis is placed on the ART of speaking; the student is made to realize that oratory is a superb art form and that to achieve a measure of success is to experience a liberation of the spirit.

"Speakers are born and not made"—it is largely true. But we all speak and we can all improve our technique. The basis is words; jewel-bright, large and small; words from Latin and words from Anglo - Saxon, words from the street and the kitchen, the farm and the workshop, slang and idiom, new-minted or as old as the language itself; we do not despise any of them. We try to teach people to treasure the words they know, mount them in finer settings, add to their store, trace their ancestry, discover

their meaning with precision, learn their history, make acquaintance with their blood-brothers in other tongues, travelling back through the great linguistic family trees to a glimpse even at Sanskrit and to return to the understanding that speech is a power indeed:

> They that have power to hurt and will do none,
> That do not do the thing they most do show,
> Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
> Unmoved, cold and to temptation slow,
> They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces . . .

READERS' FORUM

EXAMINATIONS IN ENGLISH

The Editor,

English Studies in Africa.

Dear Sir,

I did not imagine, when I provided my brief answers to the questions asked about examinations, that I was exposing myself to a diagnosis of my views on other questions on which I had not expressed myself. Still less did I imagine that this would be accompanied by suggestions of narrowness, anti-Miltonism, the cultivation of priggishness, and indoctrination! But Mr Hall has indeed advanced these suggestions, and has done so very confidently.

He begins by suggesting that there will for the most part be agreement on what he calls "the ultimate or metaphysical end" of English studies, and proceeds to treat my comment on "disinterested delight" in reading as a recognition of this "ultimate end." In this he is mistaken. I do not regard this as an "ultimate or metaphysical end," but as the immediate aim of all reading of literature. Nor can I find any basis in my own comments for Mr Hall's attribution to myself of this strangely metaphysical notion.

Mr Hall next asserts that "Professor Durrant is far more convinced about the claims of 'intensive' study than is Mr Bennett," and that "his convictions about intensive study lead him to urge a corresponding method in examinations—the textual or 'scrutiny-of-passage' type of question." Again Mr Hall is mistaken; I have no such convictions, and my preference for textual questions does not arise from them. He is mistaken also in supposing that there is any necessary correspondence between textual questions and intensive study. Textual questions have been widely used both in England and in South Africa to test a candidate's range of reading, either within a particular period or through the whole of English literature. My own conviction is that to recommend the intensive or extensive study of literature in general is absurd. Each individual literary work sets its own demands in intensiveness.

The starting-point of Mr Hall's discussion of textual questions is his assertion that I am "monogamously wedded" to them, that I

recommend the "confining" of examinations to them, and that I recommend "that the textual type of question be used exclusively." But I made it plain that I did not recommend the exclusive use of textual questions; and indeed I gave a whole paragraph (of my brief contribution) to the essay paper, and remarked: "The candidate has two or three hours in which to plan and write (the essay) and a good choice of questions of a general literary nature."

Since Mr Hall says that "the real issue lies in the recommendation that the textual type of question be used exclusively," it seems possible that the issue does not exist.

In free association with this inaccurate account of my answers, Mr Hall paints a nightmare picture of university teachers whose students despise Dickens, who regard Milton as having produced "the wrong answer," who allow James to "supersede" Dickens, and who, as Mr Hall "suspects," "equate" their students with Dr Richards's guinea-pigs.

I do not know where exactly my suggestions about textual questions are supposed, by Mr Hall, to fit into this nightmare. But at one point he makes an attempt to link me directly with his animadversions. This is at the point when he is arguing that intensive study leads to a dependence of the student on his teachers, and as he suggests, to *indoctrination.*

Mr Hall, after saying that "the intensive method," as he has seen it at work, results in "a deplorable dependence of the student upon his tutors," makes the following parenthetical remark:

> . . . (notice the *permissive* nature of Professor Durrant's remark, "If the study of critical and biographical works has, in fact, been profitably pursued . . .")

This, as it stands (and even more clearly in its context) is in no way "permissive." It simply assumes that such works will be read. But Mr Hall is not content with his *permissive*; he proceeds to argue that to *discourage* students from using commentaries is not only perverse but pusillanimous." From this it is no very great step to *prohibition,* which Mr Hall castigates as "a futile measure." [My italics.] This is like Falstaff's account of the knaves in Kendal green." But I must not complain that Mr Hall is suspicious only of myself. Others are under suspicion, for it seems that those who slip into the habit of talking of "teaching"

a novel or poem, are not merely guilty of looseness of language, but come *close to admitting indoctrination*!

Mr Hall appears to associate textual questions quite simply with intensive study, and intensive study with the tortuous pursuit of empsiguities. But he must surely be aware that textual questions were used before the Eliot-Richards-Leavis critical revolution, as he calls it, had made any impression. Such questions were used in School Certificate papers, in the form of context questions, designed to test the thorough knowledge of a work. They were also used in university entrance and scholarship papers, to test appreciation of poetry and the understanding of differences in style. Exercises in dating were administered in English universities by the strongest opponents of Dr Richards and Dr Leavis. These textual questions tested a very wide range of reading, and required the student to distinguish, for example, the various qualities of blank verse, or of the heroic couplet, or of other forms, as used in widely different periods. The textual question can by no means be regarded as a fad of the Thirties, nor can it be reasonably considered to be the tool of any particular school of criticism. The *explication de texte* is a well-established procedure in French schools and universities.

I think, however, that the use of textual questions supposes that learning does not naturally proceed "from the general to the particular." Mr Hall's analogy with the study of history is misleading; the relation between the student and particular literary works cannot usefully be likened to the relation between the student of history and particular historical events. It is the special virtue of English studies, as I understand them, that they provide an opportunity for a direct approach to their material. In the study of literature, the opportunity is offered for an immediate participation in the thought of minds of the first order. In the study of history, the student can know the mind of Napoleon or of Caesar at first hand, by studying the documents they wrote. But there is so much else to learn that this is rarely done. I have too much respect for historical studies to wish them to imitate the distinctive methods of literary studies; but I see no reason why literary studies should forfeit their own special virtue of immediacy merely because historical studies must of necessity do so. My own view is that one gets to know literature by reading literature, and that there is no other way to read it but by beginning with particular works,

and no way of reading a particular work but by reading particular words. And does Mr Hall seriously think that this method of approach encourages indoctrination? Is not the best protection against arbitrary opinion and misleading generalization the continual presence of the text of a play, a poem, or a novel? I do not think that there can be any final protection against indoctrination if the teacher is more concerned with being 'right' than with encouraging his students to observe and think for themselves. But the presence of the text, or a part of it, must surely be a salutary check upon both teacher and student, and compel both to make good their critical theories by testing them against the actual words of the writer.

Mr Hall concludes his comments with the remark that "history is littered with those who claim to have found, not an answer, but *the* answer." It is not easy to know exactly who is referred to here. The only persons mentioned by name to whom this might refer are myself and Eliot-Leavis-Richards. I can hardly believe that Mr Hall refers to Eliot-Leavis-Richards in these terms, either as a revolutionary trinity or as individual persons. I am not sure that he refers to myself, although I think most readers will take it that he does. If so, my withers are unwrung. I was asked to give my opinion on certain questions, and I did so. Nor did I advance any claim to have "found" anything, much less an "answer." I freely acknowledged my indebtedness to others; and far from claiming to have *the* answer, I wrote finally as follows:

> . . . Examinations in literature ought not to become static; they need continual criticism and revision . . . It is in the end upon the quality of the papers set, rather than upon their form, that the quality of study depends. I cannot say that our examinations in literature in general adequately test English scholarship or critical ability; but I believe that improvements are being steadily made.

I leave it to the reader to determine whether this is the language of a person who claims to have found "the answer."

I hope I shall not be thought, in dissociating myself from Mr Hall's account of my beliefs, to repudiate my own indebtedness to Mr Eliot, Dr Leavis, and Dr Richards. They are all able, in their very different ways, to speak for themselves and their very different critical doctrines. I do not hold them all in equal honour; but it seems hardly fair to any one of them to lump them together

as a single influence. What Mr Hall calls the "Eliot-Leavis-Richards" critical revolution was anything but a single movement of mind. But in some respects Mr Eliot and Dr Leavis — in their very different ways — may each claim to have encouraged, not a passing fashion, but a return to traditions which have at least an equal claim to catholicity with the historical approach favoured by the universities in the last century. I hope, however, that one may be permitted to be grateful to Mr Eliot and to Dr Leavis without being thought a member of any critical conventicle. I say this not only because any such suggestion is distasteful to myself, but because I see no reason why we should permit the discussion of literary studies in South Africa to be bedevilled by the academic party-politics of England. We have quite enough problems on our hands without adding to them by unnecessary shrillness of assertion.

I have confined myself in this answer to the immediate task of disavowal. I hope I may be permitted later to add something briefly on the merits and demerits of textual questions. For the time being I prefer to leave this discussion to others.

G. H. DURRANT.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.
12 December, 1958.

* * *

Dear Sir,

Perhaps the clue to Mr Hall's attitude in his article on "Examinations in English" in the September number of *English Studies in Africa* lies in his statement that "pitchforking the novice into a textual-critical discipline in the name of literary study [is] like thrusting him into a study of constitutional documents in the name of history. Without historical knowledge, what significance," inquires Mr Hall, "will he find in the documents?"

The analogy is a radically misleading one. For to the writer and the student of literature a work of literature is quite unlike an historical document.

Its object is to make a certain kind of impact on the individual reader's mind. How exactly to make just the impact he intends — this is all a writer is concerned with. For this purpose his words

are placed just where they are, his rhythms move just as they do. It is the quality of the impact, the actual delight it gives in the act of telling its peculiar truth that is the whole point and purpose of the work. When *Hamlet* and *Huckleberry Finn* are used as documents for historians to abstract from and generalize about, the genius that went into them is being poured down the drain.

It is into the effect of this impact on the individual student's mind that the textual question inquires. This is the opposite of "empsiguity" (and teaching empsiguity must be barren indeed!) And it cannot encourage dependence on the teacher; for the impact upon each mind *must* be something individual.

Mr Hall seems to argue, on the one hand, that reading properly is too hard for students, and on the other that therefore they should read a great deal. He almost seems to argue that we draw our salaries for robbing students of the time they should be spending in the library.

I do not share Mr Hall's low opinion of the capacities of students. Never in the world's history has intelligence been confined to teachers; and I have often seen answers, especially in second, third and fourth year, and especially to the textual type of question (which, by the way, Professor Durrant specifically declared he did *not* regard as the only desirable type), which show a fresh response, independent judgment, originality, and delight in the subject matter — and which are, in fact, delightful to read.

A few questions:

Is it usual in life, as Mr Hall so astonishingly says it is, to proceed "from the general to the particular"? How is the general ever reached except through the particular? And what in literary history is "the general"? Facts? These can do no harm and may do good. Or second- or tenth-hand opinions? These may highlight the particular book, or obscure it. But in judging which does which—whose opinion to respect—by whose judgment *can* I judge but my own? So the student must be trained to use his judgment and to trust it, much as Henry Tilney taught Catherine to use, and trust, hers.

CHRISTINA VAN HEYNINGEN.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.
9 November, 1958.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

The Editor.

Dear Sir,

In his illuminating article on *Troilus and Cressida* in the first number of *English Studies in Africa,* Professor Davis has given us a disturbing account of the subtly corrupt human nature reflected in this strange play. Mr Langman in the second number wrote a reply with which I disagree sharply. Doubtless, Professor Davis will be able to defend his own views more wisely and competently than I could hope to do. The following suggestions should be regarded as an approach to the play differing from that of both these critics.

Troilus and Cressida, written at about the same time as *Hamlet,* is concerned with a similar problem to that which confronts the Prince of Denmark. Hector, like Hamlet, tries to discover a satisfactory attitude to value, to the worth of people and actions, that will satisfy as many aspects of his problem as possible and, above all, satisfy him as a highly complicated and balanced human being. The problem is not worked out by the presentation of thoughts and actions of the main character, as in *Hamlet,* but rather by opposing different views on value, as expressed by different characters, in the course of the play. The merit of the play, then, does not so much lie in the development of character, as in the successful creation of living characters and convincing actions to express different views on value.

These views may be divided into two groups, the Greek and Trojan. On its highest and most satisfying plane, the Trojan view is expressed in Hector's words:

> But value dwells not in particular will;
> It holds his estimate and dignity
> As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
> As in the prizer. II. i. 52 ff;

and at its basest and most depraved level, in the words of Cressida:

> . . . this fault in us I find,
> The error of our eye directs our mind.
> What error leads must err. O! then conclude
> Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude. V. ii 106 ff.

In the Greek camp we find that Hector's view is, as it were, split, and the different parts upheld by different characters in a

cold-blooded, logical way. Agamemnon believes that the value of a thing lies in its being "precious of itself," for he says:

> Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan
> Puffing at all, winnows the light away;
> And what hath mass or matter, by itself
> Lies rich in virtue and unmingled.
>
> I. iii. 27 ff.

Ulysses, in sharp opposition to Hector, tends to lay more emphasis on the value residing in "the prizer," and believes in things having value only in terms of their relation to other things and to what people think of them and can use them for. He believes in value by virtue of order and reputation, and so he complains:

> The speciality of rule hath been neglected:
> . . . O! when degree is shak'd,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> The enterprise is sick!
>
> I. iii. 78 ff.

In his discussion with Achilles, he expresses the view that one's merit or value is simply a matter of reputation, and that a person virtually has no worth if he is not considered worthy by other people:

> . . . no man is the lord of anything . . .
> Though in and of him there be much consisting . . .
> Till he communicate his parts to others:
> Nor doth he himself know them for aught
> Till he behold them form'd in the applause
> Where they're extended.
>
> III. iii. 115 ff.

There is much to say for Ulysses's view. The cold logic and cynicism of his attitude are based on the long experience of a very intelligent and far-seeing man. The common-sensical wisdom of his argument to Achilles is evident:

> Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
> A great-siz'd monster of ingratitudes:
> . . .
> For honour travels in a strait so narrow
> Where one but goes abreast; . . .
> And gives to dust that is a little gilt
> More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.
>
> III. iii. 145 ff.

But at the same time these apparently true sayings are very limited. They have the quality of platitudes and are utterly devoid of feeling and sympathy. They belong to a world of tit-for-tat justice and survival of the fittest. Ulysses has very little sympathy and very few scruples, in spite of his insistence on justice and honour by order and reputation. At the meeting of the generals, Ulysses very directly and in detail describes Achilles and Patroclus's coarse imitation and mockery of Agamemnon and Nestor, without himself showing the least sympathy with the King or the ageing Nestor, although both are present. It is quite plain that his very formal and bombastic address to Agamemnon a little earlier:

> Agamemnon,
> Thou great commander, nerve and bone of Greece,
> Heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit . . . etc.
>
> I. iii. 54 ff.

and his reverence paid to Nestor:

> . . . venerable Nestor, hatch'd in silver,
> Should with a bond of air, strong as the axletree
> On which heaven rides, knit all the Greekish ears
> To his experienc'd tongue,
>
> I. iii. 65 ff.

are mere words and a formal reverence, imposed by order and reputation, not at all springing from any personal feeling towards these men. Or rather, Ulysses's 'personal feeling' towards them would probably be to see them all as instruments or obstacles to gaining his own way. His view on merit is highly opportunistic, as we see in his speech to Achilles, and especially in the way he plays off Achilles and Ajax against each other. The other Greeks have no finer and more sympathetic sense of value than Ulysses has, and therefore cannot realize the limitations of this approach. Shakespeare, however, shows up the Greek defects in various ways. Apart from Ulysses's lack of sympathy, there is Thersites's wit and logic. Because logic and intellect have prime place in the Greek camp, the scurrilous Thersites can hold his own against anyone and is applauded, even by the generals, in his railing on Ajax and Achilles. The Greek defect is seen most clearly in him: he has no sense of honour or sympathy, except towards himself, his own safety and his own reputation. He is the embodiment of logical intellect deteriorated into rotten, but still true, wit, for he is, in his own way, quite right when he says the Greeks are

"warring for a placket," and that Ajax "has no more brain than I have in my elbows."

Hector's view on value is much more complete and representative of all the complicated aspects that lend value to any person or thing. He never schemes, like Ulysses, but sends an honest and straightforward challenge to the Greeks. He keeps his word to the Greeks when he goes out to fight on the last fatal day. He is full of sympathy, as when he saves Ajax, and it is said that he very often saved his opponents. At the same time, he is no coward or weakling, and is only killed by Achilles's treachery. If Ulysses is intelligent, Hector has wisdom. In contrast to Troilus's youthful enthusiasm, Hector is able to see that, logically, Helen "is not worth what she doth cost the holding." Very shortly and convincingly Hector explains that, according to the "laws of nature and of nations," Paris and Helen are in the wrong, thus underlining Ulysses's view of 'value in order'. Yet he has not the bitterness of Helenus, and in spite of his own explanation, resolves to continue fighting for Helen,

> For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependance
> Upon our joint and several dignities.
>
> II. ii. 192 ff.

We are reminded of Hamlet's opinion that

> Rightly to be great
> Is not to stir without great argument,
> But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
> When honour's at the stake.
>
> IV. iiii. 53 ff.

Hector, in contrast to all the other characters in the play, is able to include reason, sympathy, honour and even the visionary quality of Cassandra's sayings in his sense of value. He is able to disregard all petty cares and schemes and to continue in honour what he has undertaken to do, so that on the fatal day he is almost in the position to say with Hamlet: "the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?"

But the view is not yet as complete and as clearly expressed as in *Hamlet*. There remains the grossness of the other views that have not been purged and still seem very powerful at the end of the play. The scheming of Ulysses and the treachery of Achilles are successful, while Hector does not gain the satisfaction felt by

Hamlet in knowing that at his death he left behind a purer and clearer world. There is still the danger that the Trojan view will lead to youthful excess of enthusiasm and highly idealized love like that of Troilus for Cressida, with its agony of disillusionment. It is highly ironical that Hector and Troilus, seeking a more subjective and inward value, have to externalize it on rather worthless people, like Helen and Cressida, whereas the Greeks, more concerned with outward value induced by order and reputation, are fundamentally only interested in themselves.

From the first, Troilus speaks of Cressida in ideal terms. He dwells on her cold chastity, compares her to the stars and to the classical lovers; but it is also clear from the first that Cressida is not at all what Troilus thinks she is. Her view of love is coarse and expressed in distasteful platitudes:

> Women are angels, wooing:
> Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing:
> . . .
> Men prize the thing ungained more than it is:
> That she was never yet, that ever knew
> Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
>
> I. ii. 311 ff.

She has not the inherent sense of value and uprighteousness that Hector has, and not even the sense of order and logic that the Greeks have; so that although she was probably quite sure that she loved Troilus, she only finds out her own weakness in the Greek camp and succumbs easily to Diomedes. Only a person who can act and say, as Hector does:

> Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate:
> Life every man holds dear; but the dear man
> Holds honour far more precious-dear than life;

only such a person can trust his own sense of value and remain upright in circumstances of moral stress. Cressida had nothing to fall back on.

The different views on value of Hector, Ulysses, Agamemnon and Cressida are expressed in a rather fixed and abstract way. These characters are introduced to us as holding certain opinions and they do not change much. In Troilus, however, we find the different views brought together in an internal, emotional conflict; and the tension of the drama lies in his having to struggle, through disillusionment, from a philosophical and enthusiastic adherence to

a view similar to Hector's, towards an attitude which is still very much like Hector's, but has now been made Troilus's own by his personal experience.

In the Trojan council scene he fluently opposes Hector in a hypothetical argument:

> I take to-day a wife, and my election
> Is led on in the conduct of my will;
> My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,
> Two traded pilots, 'twixt the dangerous shores
> Of will and judgment. How may I avoid,
> Although my will distaste what it elected,
> The wife I chose? there can be no evasion
> To blench from this and to stand firm by honour.
> We turn not back the silks upon the merchant
> When we have soiled them.
>
> II. i. 61 ff.

Later on, when Troilus has to discover that Cressida *is* "soiled," he has to face a real and no longer hypothetical case. Hector has warned him against the danger:

> Paris and Troilus you have both said well;
> And on the cause and question now in hand
> Have gloz'd, but superficially; . . .
> The reasons you allege do more conduce
> To the hot passion of distempered blood
> Than to make up a free determination
> 'Twixt right and wrong.
>
> II. ii. 163 ff.

In the scene of his great disillusionment, Troilus almost frantically grasps at all the different views on value introduced in the play. He returns to the image of the eyes, "the traded pilots, 'twixt . . . will and judgment," when he says:

> . . . yet there is a credence in my heart
> An esperance so obstinately strong,
> That doth invert the attest of eyes and ears.
>
> V. ii. 117 ff.

He realizes that things are not what they seem, that Cressida is not what she seemed to be. He also realizes the superficiality of

his former hypothetical reasonings; that value does not merely lie in arguing a thing into value;

> O madness of discourse,
> That cause sets up with and against itself.
>
> V. ii. 139 ff.

He also reverts to the value-induced-by-order theory of Ulysses, and sees the order as a much more holy and inviolable thing than Ulysses could do. Troilus speaks of the "rule in unity itself," and says that Cressida has broken the bonds of Heaven and has substituted for those holy ties, bonds of her own making:

> The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolv'd and loos'd;
> And with another knot, five-finger-tied,
> The fractions of her faith . . .
> . . . are bound to Diomed.
>
> V. ii. 153 ff.

Nevertheless, some of the youthful bravado remains. Troilus's change, although very violent, is not complete, but is convincing. In the bombast of his resolution, there is still the same young man we knew:

> Not the dreadful spout,
> Which shipmen do the hurricano call,
> Constring'd in mass by the almighty sun,
> Shall dizzy with more clamour Neptune's ear
> In his descent than shall my prompted sword
> Falling on Diomed.
>
> V. ii. 168 ff.

But there is a change. All the views are brought together: the value induced by the bonds of heavenly vows and order; the value induced by "the prizer," and the value residing in the object itself. Troilus, forced by the conflict of these views, realizes the blindness of his own idealization:

> . . . never did young man fancy
> With so eternal and so fix'd a soul,
>
> V. ii. 162 ff.

and now he is able really to live out what he so fluently advised Hector to do; to remain in honour bound, in the requirements of

his vows, and to fight Diomed for Cressida, even while realizing that she, too, is "not worth what she doth cost the holding."

M. VAN W. SMITH,

8 Hamman Street,
Stellenbosch.
8 January, 1959.

* * *

THE TEMPEST: A reconsideration of its meaning

The Editor.
Dear Sir,

I should like to make a few comments on Mr B. W. Rose's article, *"The Tempest*: a reconsideration of its meaning."

Mr Rose's thesis is, briefly, that an important clue to this enigmatical play's meaning may lie in the fact that Shakespeare was one of the King's Men when he wrote *The Tempest* and that the play was actually performed at the Court. Now James I (Mr Rose tells us) was both fascinated by and afraid of magic (indeed he had once, he thought, been caught in a magic tempest very similar to the one in Act I scene i of the play; and he had prohibited any dabbling in magic). Shakespeare was therefore catering in a 'business-like' way for the royal taste and for his own safety by portraying a magician who in the end renounces his art. Prospero, then, is simply a magician, albeit a 'white' one. Another important historical fact, Mr Rose says, is that James was apt to neglect his regal responsibilities, and had once almost been deposed, perhaps for this fault. In the play, Prospero *was* deposed for this very reason, and Mr Rose thinks that Shakespeare may very well have been warning the King of what might again befall him. Mr Rose goes on to suggest that this motive of Shakespeare's and his obviously remembering the plot against James) may lead to the "very core of *The Tempest*'s meaning," which flows from Prospero's "tragic fault," "his neglect of his primary duties."

Mr Rose's article is in many respects illuminating: what he says seems to provide an insight into some of the pressures under which Shakespeare may well have written and into something of the delighted tension with which we may suppose James watched the play. A few points in the thesis, however, do not quite compel conviction. It is somewhat difficult to feel that Prospero is both a figure who had to renounce his art in order to keep his creator

out of prison *and,* even if only to a small extent, a portrayal of the King himself. Moreover, Prospero's magic is, on the whole, so obviously and so significantly a good and not a malignant phenomenon. Also Shakespeare's *warning* the King seems to be rendered unnecessarily ineffective by the smallness of the emphasis placed on Prospero's irresponsibility. These comments, however, I make very tentatively.

But I think Mr Rose's views invite a more fundamental criticism. Surely he is wrong to suppose that the suggestions he makes — even if they were indisputable — constitute a real reconsideration of the play's meaning. To suggest that Shakespeare's concern with James I's interests and habits was his major concern in writing *The Tempest* is to suggest what critical opinion has generally not found to be true, that *The Tempest* is a minor play.

Prospero is a magician; but what values does his magic represent? It is unlikely that even a bad playwright, even several centuries ago, would have attempted to make a magician in a play *simply* so incomprehensible a thing as a magician; and in fact we do surely find that Prospero represents something very coherent and that his magic is important almost only in so far as it lends a power to what he says and does. I cannot see how Mr Rose can conclude, without a close examination of many parts of the text of the play, that "To break his wand and to drown his book were *acts of renunciation of magic* and nothing else" (I am not, however, supporting the specific idea which Mr Rose was at this point in his article refuting.)

Similarly, I do not think that Prospero's role of being a warning to James is at all an important one. And I think Mr Rose drastically over-simplifies the play when he concludes from his historical evidence that the main theme of the play has to do with a tragic neglectfulness in Prospero. Surely — and not because of any "tragic fault"—Prospero and Ariel, Ferdinand and Miranda, and in the end nearly all the other characters, come together — or almost together — to affirm a complex of lively values.

These brief observations I make on the evidence only of the text. But must not Mr Rose's article serve, in the end, to remind one that the only *primary* evidence about a work of art is what the work of art is in itself? If we pay too much attention, or the wrong kind of attention, to historical fact, we imprison a writer in his background.

Mr Rose ends his article in this way:

> . . . this enquiry may provide a corrective to the kind of subjective criticism that proceeds more from speculation than from evidence; and it may offer, if any is needed, a fresh approach to this most delightful of plays.

I do not see how we can accept this. As I have tried to show, Mr Rose's thesis cannot in any important way provide a "fresh approach" to the play. And the suggestions (or what seem to me to be the suggestions) that the only really valid "evidence" in criticism is historical evidence, and that properly *literary* criticism is doomed to be merely "subjective," do not seem to be valuable.

C. O. GARDNER.

University of South Africa,
Pretoria.

14 November, 1958.

* * *

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

A. C. PARTRIDGE

A Tale of a Tub, to which is added *The Battle of the Books* and *The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit,* by Jonathan Swift, edited by A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith. 2 ed. Clarendon Press, 1958. LXXVII, 374 p., 50s.

THE much-needed second edition (1958) of this book replaces that of 1920, and incorporates so many changes and improvements that it calls for a fresh notice. The original edition was planned by Mr Guthkelch, who had already edited *The Battle of the Books* separately for Chatto and Windus in 1908. Mr Guthkelch died in 1916 and the trilogy was then prepared for the press by Mr (later Professor) D. Nichol Smith, who is solely responsible for the new edition. To say that he has transformed the conception of his task is almost an understatement; the confident hand of his mature scholarship appears in almost every significant contribution to this new edition.

The work of Swift is, of course, a paradise for the annotator with a flair for research. Not only did the author cover his tracks, as a cautious satirist of his profession would, but he delighted in red-herrings (such as the fifth edition being beyond his control), and deliberate mystifications to confuse and confound his critics. For more than a generation *A Tale of a Tub* had them guessing, not only about the meaning of the allegory, but the actual identity of the writer; even Dr Johnson half a century later doubted Swift's authorship of the work. The merits of Professor Nichol Smith's edition lie in the abundance of his information about the text, but the avoidance of those pedantries of comment and annotation against which Swift barbed his shafts at the expense of the eighteenth-century academicians. Unfortunately two compositor's errors were overlooked in this edition—'not' for 'nor' (p. 15, end of first paragraph) and 'case' for 'cast' (p. 246, fifth line of second paragraph).

Swift, far more than Sir William Temple, was a critical humanist who dissected scholarship so that dullness and pedantry were in sharp relief to genuine illumination. Quintana, in defence of specialized learning, thinks that Bentley and Wotton, rather than Swift and Temple, were of the party of the angels. But

The Battle of the Books was no vindictive *Dunciad*; and modern learning has never been exempt from pseudo-science or pretentiousness. Swift analyses its stupidities with consummate skill; in the *Apology* of 1709 he observes that the commentator turned aesthetic judge quickly falls into error, that biographical conjecture becomes suspect as soon as myth is elevated to fact. The Augustans, characteristically, attacked dullness as much as cant, for being the arch-enemy of intellectual integrity in the eighteenth century. "As wit is the noblest and most useful gift of human nature," wrote Swift, "so is humour the most agreeable; and where these two enter far into the composition of any work, they will render it always acceptable to the world."

Swift does not often damn by faint praise, but sometimes by ironical overplus of positive eulogy. Thus, "Every true critic is a hero born, descending in a direct line from a celestial stem" is as typical as his cynical observation that a professional critic becomes tainted "with the defects of other pens"—the dyer is eventually subdued to what he works in. Swift, when he laughs at an index, is concerned not with the utility of the thing itself, but with the trivialities to which it can be lent; his mockery of the vaunted advances of mathematics and experimental science since Descartes and Newton is directed not at the mental discipline, but at the inanity and artificiality of self-created problems. Swift, in an indirect way, was a considerable educational reformer, not an opponent of progress. He had the sense to see that reason, dignity, proportion and integrity in the use of words lie at the heart of true humanism, and that learning without it is "a sort of conjuring," having neither pattern nor end.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Wootton, one of his victims, said of the anonymous author that "such a work deserves well of mankind." Swift deserves equally the close attention of the modern reader, especially the firmness and concreteness, yet flexibility and lucidity of his style. Though it leans more in manner and syntax to Marvel, Dryden and the seventeenth century, than to Goldsmith or Fielding, its supple efficiency and transparency of meaning were something novel in English literature. The surface texture has its roots deep in the workings of a profound mind. In spite of the topicality of his matter, Swift writes no word with the taint of ephemerality. "In all my writings, I have had constant regard to this great end, not to suit

and apply them to particular occasions and circumstances of time, of place, or of person; but to calculate them for universal nature, and mankind in general."

A word should be said about the textual authority of the edition; for the editor was faced with the dilemma of having to use, as substantive version, the fifth edition of *A Tale of a Tub* (1710), thereby sacrificing the orthography of the first edition of 1704, which may, or may not, have been Swift's own. I do not think that the loss of the latter is significant enough to warrant departures from the *textus receptus,* which had obviously seen revision by Swift himself. The new editor has judiciously adopted preferable readings from the first edition whenever they seemed to him desirable; and in view of the obscurity surrounding the printing of the first edition, no more should be expected of him.

* * *

The Collected Poems of Francis Carey Slater. Blackwood, 1957. XII, 314 p. 12s. 6d.

THE late Roy Campbell, in his preface to this collection, was generous when he considered *The Dead Eagle* "as great as anything yet written by a South African". Of its kind, it is first-rate verse; but Slater at his liveliest can scarcely be elevated to the rank of a poet.

In praising Slater as a pioneer "who acclimatized English poetry to these shores" Roy Campbell accorded to him his most honourable title. The pioneer was also an indefatigable anthologist, who culled his rarities with a collector's zeal that sometimes forsook literary judgment. He preserved the names of many poetasters, who would be forgotten, but for the national pride of educational book-selection committees.

Without the genius of John Clare or the real talent of William Barnes, regional poets with an instinct for the racy beauties of dialect, Slater was the most typical, because the best, of our secondary landscape school in South Africa. To be moved by their verse, the reader must have known and admired the physical setting of the nature out of which the writing was born; whereas genuine poetry has a name, but no local habitation. The triteness of the rhythm, figures, and visual awareness (with little

other sensibility) are the product of reading and a jejune representation; the art is as derivative and sterile as some imitative pastoral eclogues of the classical tradition. A poet's gift is not a dilettantish love of this or that, but a command of language, forged by a spirit of unusual insight and capacity for feeling. The joy of nature should hurt, as well as heal; words are not tranquillizers, but powerful rejuvenators of the five senses.

Examine Slater's verse at random, and there is little evidence of the illuminating spark that spells survival. *Lament for a Dead Cow* is, perhaps, the most popular of all his lyrics; and deservedly so, because its song-like rhythm is admirably adapted to its theme. The shiny blackness of Wetu's coat is aptly likened to that of the "isipingo-berry." But then come the ineluctable verbal couplings "sunbaked hilltop," "yapping curs," "bewildered eyes," and the more banal "sunburnt veld," "thirsty sun," "empty sky" and "desolate kraal." One curse of South African poetry is its catalogue of handy epithets, relentlessly tagged to the commonplace substantive. The versifier may display ingenuity; but the writing is a cultivated game, a polite avocation for delighted amateurs, a recovery of enervated spirits exhausted by the monotony of daily toil:

> Dazed, the little veld-flowers droop,
> Droop and faint, crumble and die,
> And their shadows comfort the veld no more.

What comfort the shade of little veld flowers could offer to the torrid, drought-stricken veld, it is difficult to conceive! It is, however, a pretty thought, and Slater is full of these harmless delights. But of poetry as an art of imaginative expression, vital enough to present a unique conceptual experience of the life we know, but cannot characterize, he gave only too little evidence.

* * *

Peculiarities in English, by J. Millington-Ward. Longmans, 1957. VII, 251 p., 8s.

MR MILLINGTON-WARD, who is Director of the Ward School of English Studies at Athens, has followed up his guide to *The Use of the Tenses in English* (1954) with this book on 'Peculiarities', comprising some functional uses of special English verbs, articles, determinatives, substantives and stops.

It is the kind of handbook that has grown out of his experience as a teacher of English to foreign students; but it is not without value for the Englishman who has never appreciated the niceties of usage of some of the commonest words in his language.

Except in the treatment of *shall* and *will,* the author has been able to give more attention to his selected difficulties than has Fowler in *Modern English Usage.* Though he is apt to state the rules baldly, when we should prefer comment and explanation, the practical ends of the book probably make this desirable. Here is an example of the sort of directive I have in mind:

> *Was* can never be used after *if* when the clause that follows *if* refers either to the present or to the future; . . . However, when the clause that follows *if* refers to the past, the first and third persons singular *must* be followed by *was*; *were,* in such cases, is always wrong.

The use of *shall* and *will* is subtle even for the accomplished English speaker; Mr Millington-Ward can hardly be said to make it more transparent for the foreigner, except in the useful tabulation of Appendix III. Nor can we accept his statement that the distinction in use is actually more blunted in Scotland, the U.S.A., Canada and Australia, than in England itself; for almost everywhere *will* is in the ascendant.

On the other hand, the sections on Inversion (109-112) are excellent; though the significance of the position of *only* and *not only* seems elementary to the experienced prose writer, it is seldom mastered at school.

Similarly, the use of what the author calls "determinatives," words like *one, some, any, every* and *each,* is a tricky business, and the distinctions of meaning are clearly, sometimes wittily, made; e.g. . . . if you have not been . . . in prison, you should not say: "In prison, *one* learns to hate the sight of a key"; because the indefinite use of *one,* meaning 'all people concerned', must include the speaker himself. Then follows a paragraph by Somerset Maugham in which the indefinite *one* is characteristically sustained for thirty-eight uses.

The average reader will, no doubt, be surprised to learn (on p. 137) that there are certain verbs, e.g. those of perception, affection (or the reverse), wish and desire, which cannot be used in continuous tenses.

In the classification of irregular verbs, Mr Millington-Ward's list is open to objection. What is his criterion for regular and irregular, and is it of value when verbs such as *leap, set, spell* and *spread* are included in his list of irregulars? This is a case for historical explanation, which would clear up such trivial anomalies.

What is called the Saxon genitive (is there any other in English?) is intelligently handled, especially the use of *'s* after proper nouns ending in *s* (see p. 193). While there is justification for *Moses' preachings,* there is none for *St James' Street.* Yet this type of possessive still continues in use.

In his miscellaneous matters, Mr Millington-Ward does well to point out the difference of value given in England and America to the numeral *billion;* also to the need for accurate placing of full-stops and other punctuation marks in relation to marks of quotation. The intricacies of some of his instances puzzle not only the reader, but the experienced proof-reader; though some of the ultra-pedantic exactitudes he recommends would take courage to put into practice.

Peculiarities in English, for the precise user of the language, is distinctly a desk-book to be set beside Fowler, Eric Partridge and West and Kimber.

* * *

A Handbook of English Grammar, by R. W. Zandvoort, Longmans, 1957. XII, 351 p., index, 21s.

FORMAL English grammar has been under fire during the past generation, as a derivative of Latin, with no educational value as a discipline of thinking. This denigration is as unwise, as the futility is debatable—at any rate until English has arrived at a more positive approach to the control of speaking and writing. English grammar was modelled on that of Latin only by the pedantic regularizers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who unfortunately burdened the study with a clumsy nomenclature and unskilful definitions, ill-fitting the requirements of the complex analytical language English had become.

Strictly, grammar is an abstraction of logicians from historical usage; divorced from its historical setting it is largely impractical. It was partly to negative the obscure and complicated history

that the modern science of structural linguistics (with remarkably limited rules) was born. But the approach of the latter is entirely different, as it stems from the phonetic structures of operative words in phrases and sentences, and their semantic consequences. It rightly claims that formal grammar is an *ex post facto* abstraction from the genius of a language; but so are some aspects of mathematics from plane geometry.

Professor R. W. Zandvoort is, in essentials, an orthodox grammarian; he deals with the parts of speech and accidence before syntax, which is a sensible order, since the clauses and the degree of subordination in logical analysis function similarly in complex structures to the parts of speech in a simple sentence. Words have relational functions, whose structure and order, as well as their fitness, build up a totality of meaning. The comprehension of the latter is not what the philosopher would call 'holistic' without an understanding of the relation the parts bear to one another. But as many people are capable of enjoying motoring, without a knowledge of what goes on under the car's bonnet, so good writing can be appreciated, and even learnt, without sophistication in the intricacies of grammar.

Within the framework of his orthodoxy, Professor Zandvoort is a functional grammarian who, like Jespersen, a true innovator, describes the parts of speech in action, according to usage and idiom. This is the ideal procedure for the foreign teacher who has to explain the workings of English to his compatriots; for the native Englishman the method often involves complicated explanations for comparatively simple phenomena (for instance, the treatment of concord)—and the value of this level of abstraction may be open to question. An instance is to be found on p. 14, where Zandvoort discusses the "Accusative with Infinitive" construction, e.g. *I hate you to talk like that* (which, in spite of the first three words, he points out, may be said to a friend):

> It is probably unnecessary to point out that English has no 'accusative' in the sense that Latin and some other inflected languages have. The term cannot very well be dispensed with in the present instance, however. Some grammarians prefer to speak of an *object* with infinitive; which involves them in the paradox of explaining that the 'object' is not really an object in cases like those described.

From this kind of paradox Professor Zandvoort is himself not exempt, when he explains that the traditional term 'accusative' "stands for the stem of a noun . . . as well as for the object form of a personal pronoun (*me, him,* etc.)."

This is the kind of seduction to which an orthodox grammarian exposes himself when he flirts with the sophisticated parvenu, modern linguistics. He cannot, indeed, serve two mistresses; and the question arises, which of the techniques for acquiring command of a language will, in the end, prove the more effective. In modern analytical English there is change in function of words without modifying inflexions; need we then fence with phantom relics of declensions and conjugations? The question may be an academic, but is not a useless, one; it offers the alternatives of (1) investigating a language through its historical developments, so as to discover its basic patterns and nuances, and (2) the *ad hoc* dissection of that language in its living, functioning modern form, as a utilitarian vehicle of communication.

Jespersen was right in seeing the eleventh-to-fifteenth century emancipation of English from its inflexional bondage as a *progress* and not a debasement. But there is no denying that English is, in consequence, a hybrid vehicle, and the dichotomy of its behaviour has to be squarely faced, but seldom is, by grammarians. Their older method, prompted by the study of rhetoric, was descriptive and normative; it formulated rules, until their number, complexity and exceptions made this approach unrealistic. An example from Zandvoort's *Handbook* must suffice. On p. 29 (footnote) he writes:

> In *Your house wants painting, your house* is the grammatical subject of *wants,* but the logical object of *painting,* because the house undergoes the action of painting.

The issue, however, is stylistic, rather than grammatical; for *Your house wants painting* contains in the verb *wants* a stronger element of personification than is found in *Your house needs to be painted.* Moreover, the house has *not yet,* in truth, undergone the action of painting at all.

The newer method of grammar, which is more properly Professor Zandvoort's, consists of diagnostic analysis of the recognized patterns of speech, idiomatic ramifications that are almost

never-ending; but it has the merit of dealing with a living organism, not the manipulation of abstract structural units. No Englishman is likely, however, to have committed himself to such a distinction as Professor Zandvoort makes on p. 16 (footnote):

> "Spoken English" includes written English in so far as the latter does not differ from the language as commonly spoken.

The real difference between literary and spoken English is surely one of attitude, tone and vocabulary, rather than of grammar. When Zandvoort says (p. 140) that *His was a complex character* is more literary than *His character was a complex one,* he is confusing stylistic emphasis with a difference in the mental attitude of the speaker. The same may be said of the order of the sentence on p. 226, *She is a nice woman, your aunt.*

The fact is that modern grammarians have begun to neglect the old conception of grammar as a branch of logic or rhetoric (an advanced study, improper in the schools) and to discover it as a practical aid to speaking and writing. It used to be thought that grammar (as conceived in the nineteenth century) was a fruitful method of teaching the theory of composition; but for clear and accurate expression, parsing and analysis are now known to have a limited value in a liberal education. Composition is lively communication—it is concerned with the movement of ideas, relevance and fitness of expression, the ability to stimulate thought or emotions in others. As such, composition is the physiology of speech, grammar its anatomy, a science of relative measurements, with a predisposed set of patterns. Professor Zandvoort is sound, when he maintains (p. 266) that "it is the linguistic sense of native speakers, not the historical dictionary, that forms the ultimate test," and sounder still when he reminds the student on p. 47 that "making distinctions necessarily creates doubtful cases, and that speech, like life of which it is a function, cannot be cut up into small fragments, each fitting into its own special pigeon-hole."

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A 120-page Report on a High School English Teachers' Conference held at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, on 29 November, 1958, is available, and may be obtained upon request to the Editor of this journal.

The Witwatersrand University Press published in 1955 a work on Olive Schreiner by Marion V. Friedmann entitled *Olive Schreiner*: a study in latent meanings. Copies can be obtained from the Press, price 8s. 6d.

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